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THE PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR'S ROLE, PRACTICES, AND CHALLENGES IN DEVELOPING PRINCIPALS' INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP CAPACITY

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THE PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR'S ROLE, PRACTICES, AND CHALLENGES IN DEVELOPING PRINCIPALS' INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP CAPACITY

by

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family: Hassan, Seher, and Layla. You are my life, my loves, and my inspiration.

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Abstract

THE PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR'S ROLE, PRACTICES, AND CHALLENGES IN DEVELOPING PRINCIPALS' INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP CAPACITY

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The purpose of this qualitative study employing the grounded theory approach was to explore the principal supervisors' role, the practices they employ, and the challenges they encounter in developing principals' instructional leadership capacity. Additionally, the study examined how the principal supervisors addressed the surfaced challenges. Three questions guided the study: 1) What role do principal supervisors play in developing principals' instructional leadership capacity? 2) What practices do principal supervisors employ to develop principals' instructional leadership capacity? 3) What challenges do principal supervisors encounter in developing principals' instructional leadership capacity and how do they address them?

Participants were purposefully selected to include those currently employed as principal supervisors in Texas school districts for the last three consecutive years. A total

of three principal supervisors agreed to participate. Data were collected through three semi-structured interviews, pertinent document reviews, and observations.

Findings suggest that principal supervisors enact two main roles, namely instructional leader and administrative manager. To perform these dual roles, principal supervisors employ specific and intentional practices to develop principals' instructional leadership capacity. These practices include: building relationships, providing and facilitating professional learning, and coaching for instructional leadership. Findings also indicate the principal supervisors encounter contextual challenges, such as central office politics and decision-making, multiple administrative role expectations, minimal instructional leader role support, and lack of familiarity of curriculum and instruction across grade-levels. To overcome the surfaced challenges, principal supervisors rely on previous role experiences, seek colleague expertise and professional learning opportunities, set a balanced schedule, work as a collaborative team, and establish a vision and goals. This study attempted to provide greater insight associated with the position of the principal supervisor for those currently serving in such capacity and those aspiring to become principal supervisors.

Additionally, the results of this exploratory study may promote a better understanding of the complexity of the principal supervisor role and inform school district administrators who determine, communicate, and direct the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of the position. Finally, implications for practice and future studies are presented.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

School organizations are continuously responding to the external pressures of the federal, state, local, and community expectations to improve student achievement outcomes. Most notably, the school principal is the one in the spotlight and under the scrutiny of stakeholders to ensure optimal school performance. The instructional leadership capacity of the school principal is a critical factor and is second only to the classroom teacher who directly impacts student achievement (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010; Miller, 2014). Research conducted by Branch, Hanushek, and Rivkin (2013) found that "highly effective principals raise the achievement of a typical student in their schools by between two and seven months of learning in a single year" (p. 63). Similarly, Waters, Marzano, and McNullty (2003) found that an effective principal has the potential of increasing student achievement scores 10 percentile points from one year to the next.

Although the instructional leadership role of the principal is vital to student achievement, the roles and responsibilities of the principal extend well beyond instruction, including the daily school operations, facility management, personnel management, professional development, budgeting, curriculum, and community relations (Grissom & Loeb, 2011; National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), 2017a; National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA), 2015; Rousmaniere, 2007; Young & Fuller, 2009). In addition, principals are responsible for developing both

talent and leadership capacity on their respective campuses (NASSP, 2017a; NPBEA, 2015). Consequently, today's principalship requires a leader who is not only well-versed in instructional practices but is also able to manage the day-to-day operational and managerial functions of the school (Grissom & Loeb, 2011). However, the increasing demands on school principals have had a negative effect on their career longevity and student academic performance. According to the NPBEA (2015):

> The high turnover rate of educational leaders nationwide points to the complexities, responsibilities, and relentless pressures of the job, and such turnover derails improvement efforts necessary for student learning. Whether they are first-year novices or veterans of the profession, educational leaders need ongoing support to succeed in a job that is dramatically changing. (p. 6)

Between 2011–2012 and 2012–2013, nearly one in five principals left a current school assignment either due to retirement, moving to another school, accepting another position, or leaving the profession entirely (Goldring, Taie, & Riddles, 2014). The vacancies are outpacing the production of qualified principal candidates thus producing a vacuum in the leadership pipeline (NASSP, 2017b). The NASSP (2009) reports, "Additionally, many potential leaders are choosing not to apply for openings, thus creating a shallow applicant pool" (para. 2). Conversely, those who do choose to accept a principal position find themselves overwhelmed with job responsibilities, some of which may be above and beyond their scope of leadership competencies (Leithwood & Azah, 2014). For principals to be successful in their role requires rigorous preparation prior to becoming a principal (Cheney & Davis, 2011; Mendels, 2016) and ongoing instructional leadership development during the principalship itself (Mendels, 2016; NASSP, 2017a). Yet, 67% of

principals in a survey, conducted by Farkas, Johnson, and Duffett (2003), noted that their principal preparation programs and or graduate programs did not prepare them for the realities of the principalship and only 44% asserted that most of their professional learning occurred via on-the-job experiences.

Recently, The Wallace Foundation, a philanthropic organization, has heavily invested in researching, piloting, and making recommendations to transform current central office practices to enhance the development of a principal's leadership capacity. The Wallace Foundation commissioned a national level research study in which Honig, Copland, Rainey, Lorton, and Newton (2010) revealed that districts seeking student achievement gains actively engaged in the process of "central office transformation" where "school district central office administrators exercise[d] essential leadership, in partnership with school leaders, to build capacity" and "to help all schools improve the quality of teaching and learning" (p. iii). Furthermore, "there seems little doubt that both district and school leadership provides a critical bridge between most educational reform initiatives and their consequences for students" (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004, p. 70). The connection between central office and school principals is often the responsibility of the central office leader supervising the school principals, also known as the principal supervisor. The principal supervisor's position is emerging as one critical to developing the school principal's instructional leadership capacity and supporting the principal in improving students' academic achievement in many districts across the nation (Mendels, 2016; Saphier & Durkin, 2011).

Thus, the focus of this study is on the role of the principal supervisors who directly support the school principals in developing their instructional leadership capacity. This chapter presents the background and context of the problem, a statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, and a brief overview of the methodology. A list of terms and definitions, delimitations, limitations, assumptions, and explanation of the significance of the study are also included.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE PROBLEM

The evolution of the principal role. The pivotal role of the school principal emerged in the educational system by the mid-nineteenth century. At one time the classroom teacher had sole control of educational decisions, but the role of the principal developed in response to a growing student population and society's desire to educate their children (Brown, 2005). More importantly, the role was conceived to manage the daily operations of the school (Cuban, 1988). Towards the latter part of the century, principals quickly gained momentum and prestige among school boards and the community (Kafka, 2009). During this time and into the twentieth-century, principals were expected to be both managers and instructional leaders though at times one took precedence over the other. The era of the Reagan Administration during the 1980s ushered in federally-mandated policies requiring the principal to take a heavy hand in managing compliance-oriented tasks in hopes of improving instruction (Brown, 2005). As the principalship moved into the 21st century, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 imposed even heavier

accountability demands on the principal to improve student outcomes across all student groups. The recent 2015 re-authorization of NCLB as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) continues to carry forward the core expectations of NCLB, and the principal is under greater pressure to improve teacher effectiveness and student outcomes (Grissom & Loeb, 2011; The Wallace Foundation, 2009). Ensuring such outcomes requires establishing clear role expectations, ongoing support, coaching, mentoring, and professional development from district central office and from the principal supervisor who directly supports the principals.

The role of central office leadership. Just as the principal's role has evolved over time so has the role of district central office. Historically, the district central office role has been supervisory in practice and focused more on top-down management. However, the once top-down management of central office leaders no longer suffices in the era of high-stakes accountability to improve student outcomes. The relationship between the district central office and the school-level principal is not only critical in managing the day-to-day operations of the school, but also in leading instruction to improve the academic achievement of all students as well as teacher effectiveness (Johnson & Chrispeels, 2010; Mendels, 2016). To move towards instructional improvement, effective districts ensure certain factors are considered. Of those, "the most salient factors identified include strong instructional leadership, a systemwide focus on achievement, and consistency of instruction" in addition to "district-guided curriculum and aligned assessments, coherent

professional development, and frequent monitoring and use of data for decision making as well as the development of a shared vision" (Johnson & Chrispeels, 2010, p. 739).

Moreover, districts must also create program management systems which not only clarify the role of the principal but also ensure a transparent evaluation system is in place, and ongoing professional development aligned to the needs of the individual principals is present (Goldring, Grissom, Rubin, Rogers, Neel, & Clark, 2018; Ikemoto, Taliaferro, Fenton, & Davis, 2014). However, to guarantee the support and resources are reaching principals requires an active and collaborative type of supervisory role. As such, many school districts have attempted to re-define and expand the role of the principal supervisor.

The role of principal supervisors. Similar to the role of the principal, the principal supervisor's role has also fluctuated between that of a manager and an instructional leader. Traditionally, the role has been more oriented towards administrative and managerial tasks related to the functioning of schools (Burch & Danley, 1980; Honig, 2012). In fact, the role of the principal supervisor, according to researchers, has mostly been undefined, over-looked, and under-utilized in developing the principals' instructional leadership capacity (Ikemoto et al., 2014; Saphier & Durkin, 2011). However, recent research studies have taken a closer look at the principal supervisor role and have deemed it a necessary and critical role in developing principals. The participating districts in these studies re-designed and expanded the once managerial role of the principal supervisor to one of an instructional leader (Casserly, Lewis, Simon, Uzzell, & Palacios, 2013; Corcoran, Casserly, Price-Baugh, Walston, Hall, & Simon, 2013; Goldring et al., 2018; Honig, 2012).

Similarly, Vitcov and Bloom (2010) found that many districts are beginning to place a high value on the principal supervisor role.

Currently, no uniform guidelines or required standards exist at the national or state level for principal supervisors as it is the case for principals and teachers. The roles and responsibilities of the principal supervisor are defined by the school district in which they work. As a result, the role of the principal supervisor can vary from one school district to another (Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), 2015; Corcoran et al., 2013; Honig, 2012). However, a few theoretical frameworks and standards have been recently developed to provide some guidance and clarity to the role and practices of principal supervisors.

In 2010, Vitcov and Bloom (2010) stated the following as considerations when defining the role and practices of the principal supervisor:

- The supervision of principals should be a primary responsibility, not an afterthought.
- Principal supervisors should receive training in the supervision process and have ongoing opportunities for reflection and professional development to improve their practice.
- The primary focus of principal supervisors should be to improve principal performance.
- Principal supervision should be ongoing, connected to the principal's growth from year to year, and grounded in a coaching relationship.
- Principal supervision should be driven by a vision of the supervisor and principal as leaders of professional learning communities.
- Principal supervision should be informed by multiple data sources.
- Principal supervision should be consistent with adult learning and professional development best practices, including collaboration and a sense of shared ownership. (para. 4)

In addition, the CCSSO (2015) in collaboration and counsel with The Wallace Foundation published the first *Model Principal Supervisor Professional Standards* (MPSPS). The MPSPS includes eight standards which provide guidance on designing the position of the principal supervisor to focus more on developing principals' instructional leadership capacity by dedicating time for coaching principals and providing professional development.

Though these considerations (Vitcov & Bloom, 2010) and standards (CCSSO, 2015) exist, they are merely suggestions and strictly voluntary unless states or districts adopt them as the driving theoretical framework which defines the roles and practices of principal supervisors. Therefore, in the absence of clearly defined roles and expectations, principal supervisors face challenges which may hinder their practices in developing principals' instructional leadership practices.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Recognizing the mounting pressures of accountability, the declining numbers of highly qualified principals in the succession pipeline, the perceived lack of preparation of pre-service principals, and the need for instructional leadership guidance, many districts are reevaluating and redefining how some central office leaders, specifically those who supervise principals, provide ongoing support for practicing principals. To date, studies have been conducted on the critical role of the transformative efforts being carried out by central offices across the nation to elevate the instructional leadership capacity of school

principals (Fink & Silverman, 2014; Goldring et al., 2018; Honig et al., 2010). In addition, numerous studies have also cited the link between the principal's instructional leadership and students' academic achievement (Branch et al., 2013; Louis et al., 2010; Miller, 2014; Waters et al., 2003). However, studies on the vital role of the principal supervisor in developing the instructional leadership capacity of the school principal are just beginning to emerge in the educational leadership research.

Only a handful of studies have been specifically focused on the role of the principal supervisor and the practices they utilize to enhance principals' instructional leadership capacity, and thus the principal supervisor role merits further exploration (Casserly et al., 2013; Corcoran et al., 2013; Goldring et al., 2018; Honig et al., 2010; Honig, 2012; Honig & Rainey, 2014; Ovando & Huckestein, 2003; Thessin, Richardson, & Reyes, 2018). Researchers suggest that further inquiry should specifically examine the principal supervisors' role and the contributions to the development of principals' instructional leadership capacity (Honig et al., 2010; Honig, 2012). Studies should also identify the challenges principal supervisors face in their work with principals (Honig, 2012).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

As suggested through previous research, a need exists to further explore the critical role of the principal supervisor (Honig, 2012; Honig & Rainey, 2014). Saphier and Durkin (2011) state that "those of us focused on systemic reform need now to turn our attention and accumulated learning to creating and empowering pivotal players in improving our

schools— those who supervise principals" (para. 6). The role of principal supervisors as instructional leadership capacity builders is essential to the success of principals. According to Ikemoto et al. (2014), "Effective systems provide principals with on-going supervision and support from highly skilled principal managers who partner with principals to improve student achievement, provide support and a sounding board, and who work to remove barriers to principal success" (p. 11).

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the principal supervisors' role, the practices they employ, and the challenges they encounter in developing principals' instructional leadership capacity. Additionally, the study identified how the principal supervisors addressed the challenges. Researchers in the future may use the conclusions of this study to further illuminate the position of the principal supervisor and how it impacts the instructional leadership of principals.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What role do principal supervisors play in developing principals' instructional leadership capacity?
2. What practices do principal supervisors employ to develop principals' instructional leadership capacity?
3. What challenges do principal supervisors encounter in developing principals' instructional leadership capacity and how do they address them?

Overview of the Methodology

This exploratory, qualitative study employed the grounded theory approach. Grounded theory research is conducted in the absence of a pre-existing theoretical framework. Instead, the researcher develops a theory based on the emergent themes discovered during the data collection process (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Due to the limited, yet emerging research on the role of the principal supervisor, this exploratory study may provide additional foundational and empirical information for future research and theory development. The use of qualitative research allowed the researcher to facilitate in-person interviews with the participants, observe them in their natural settings, and gain a deeper insight into the participants' understanding of their roles (Creswell, 2007).

For the purposes of this study, semi-structured interviews, pertinent document reviews, and observations were used. The interviews included three principal supervisors in three different school districts based on the following criteria: (1) the district has principal supervisor positions focused on developing principals' instructional leadership positions, and (2) the principal supervisor position has been established for more than three years. The interviews lasted from 60 to 75 minutes in length for each participant. The types of documents reviewed included district organizational charts, principal supervisor's job descriptions and evaluation tools, meeting agendas, and any other relevant guiding documents or frameworks which may highlight the district's expectation on instructional leadership. The document review not only provided greater insight into the principal supervisor role but also assisted the researcher in validating the data or highlighting

discrepancies between the participants' responses and the written expectations of the roles and expectations of developing principals' instructional leadership capacity.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Administration or Administrative. "Includes all of those tasks aimed at maintaining the stability of the organization, from preparing reports, constructing schedules, disciplining pupils, meeting with parents, solving noninstructional problems for teachers and students, to the common managerial duties of budgeting, making personnel decisions, and maintaining the building" (Cuban, 1988, p. 60).

Central office. Also referred to as the district office is responsible for providing the necessary support, resources, and personnel to all stakeholders within the school organization.

Coaching. "To train, tutor or give instruction in order to enhance a person's growth and performance, as well as promote individual responsibility and accountability. Using their coaching skills, principal supervisors evaluate and address the developmental needs of principals and collaborate with them to create a professional learning plan that will help them gain the necessary skills to become better instructional leaders" (CCSSO, 2015, p. 23).

Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). "A nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense

Education Activity, and five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions. CCSSO provides leadership, advocacy, and technical assistance on major educational issues" (CCSSO, 2017, para. 1).

Instructional leadership. Actions, instructional or managerial, a principal takes to enhance students' academic growth and improve teachers' instructional practices (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Hallinger, 2005; Grissom & Loeb, 2011; Marks & Printy, 2003).

Managerial. "Duties of budgeting, making personnel decisions, and maintaining the building" (Cuban, 1988, p. 60).

National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP). "NASSP is the leading organization of and voice for school principals, assistant principals, and school leaders from across the United States and in over 35 countries around the world" (NASSP, "Who we are," 2017c, para. 1).

National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA). "The National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) is a national alliance of major membership organizations committed to the advancement of school and school-system leadership. Member organizations represent the educational administration profession and collaborate to improve the preparation and practice of educational leaders at all levels. Member organizations include: the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), the National Council of Professors of Educational

Administration (NCPEA), and the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA)" (NPBEA, "About our organization and mission," n.d., para. 1).

Principal Supervisor. A central office staff member who supervises the school principals in the district. The title may vary from district to district. Other synonymous titles include area superintendent, executive director, area director, zone superintendent, instructional superintendent, area leadership director, network leader, principal manager, and instructional leadership director (ILD).

Professional Learning. "The act of developing the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions that practicing educators need to help students perform at higher levels" (CCSSO, 2015, p. 24).

School Leadership. "Usually refers to the work of the principal" (Kafka, 2009, p. 318)

Supervision. "Includes monitoring instruction through observing and evaluating teachers, coordinating and assessing curriculum, analyzing test results, reviewing report cards, teaching demonstration lessons, and leading teacher workshops" (Cuban, 1988, p. 60).

Support. "[R]eferring to issues typically regarded as 'capacity,' i.e., administrative support, information, time, training, and other resources" (Bauer & Bogotch, 1997, p. 4).

DELIMITATIONS

The study only included three principal supervisors from three different school districts in Texas based on the following criteria: (1) the district has principal supervisor positions focused on developing principals' instructional leadership positions, and (2) the principal supervisor position has been established for more than three years. Consequently, the scope of the study mainly addressed the perceptions of these participants and not the principals themselves. Although, other central office positions support the principals' instructional leadership, they were not considered in this study.

LIMITATIONS

Given the scope and nature of a qualitative research approach, generalizability of the findings is limited. A limitation of this study was that the participants were all employed in three large Texas school districts; therefore, the findings may not transfer to other school districts within Texas or to other states. Further, the researcher's personal biases could have affected the analysis of the participants' responses and the information extrapolated from the document reviews. Therefore, the researcher took the necessary precautions to limit the biases.

ASSUMPTIONS

The researcher assumed:

1. Principal supervisors are directly in charge of developing principals' leadership capacity as part of their scope of responsibilities.
2. Central office and principal supervisors have a defined list, framework, or tool which articulates the successful instructional leadership practices principals use to guide their day-to-day work.
3. Principal supervisors differentiate support for principals according to the needs of the principals.
4. Principal supervisors face challenges in their roles.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study may add to the growing knowledge base of the role of the principal supervisors. This study may also provide greater insight for current principal supervisors and for those aspiring to become one in the future. The findings may provide a guide for central office leaders in reexamining the role of the principal supervisor and in clearly defining how they must support the development of principals' instructional leadership capacity. Additionally, the results of this exploratory study might provide further insight for districts and local state agencies into the similarities and differences in perceptions of roles, the practices being employed, and the challenges affecting the development of principals' instructional leadership capacity.

SUMMARY

Chapter 1 presented an introduction of the study's topic and provided the background and context of the problem. It also described the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the three research questions, and a synopsis of the comparative qualitative methodology and theoretical frameworks. This chapter also included pertinent definitions and acronyms and concluded with a discussion of the study's delimitations, limitations, assumptions, and significance of the study.

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 presents the review of the literature beginning with a historical look at the emergence of the principalship followed by a review of the principals' leadership roles and the challenges they face. The review continues with the role of central office leadership and the principal supervisor's role, practices, challenges, and responses to those challenges. Finally, the review concludes with an analysis of the literature and a summary. Chapter 3 provides the study's methodology including the research method and design, descriptions of the population and sample, data collection instruments, and the data analysis process. In Chapter 4 the study's findings are analyzed. Lastly, Chapter 5 will present a summary of the major findings, limitations, recommendations for practice, recommendation for future studies, and then a conclusion of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

As federal, state, and local mandates continue to add pressure on school districts to raise student performance levels, much of the burden falls to the school principal. To be successful, principals require coaching, mentoring, professional development, training, and support from central office staff, particularly by those who directly supervise them. Recent studies have highlighted the role of the district and of principal supervisors as critical contributors to principal effectiveness (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010; Louis et al., 2010; Honig, 2012). However, research on the principal supervisor's contributions to develop principals' instructional leadership capacity remains limited (Honig, 2012).

The literature review is organized in four strands. These include the historical development of the principalship, the principals' leadership roles and the challenges they face, the role of central office leadership, and the expansion of the principal supervisor's role. It concludes with an analysis of the literature and a summary.

THE HISTORICAL EMERGENCE OF THE PRINCIPALSHIP

The pivotal role of the school principal emerged in the educational system by the mid-nineteenth century. Since then, the role of the principal has evolved over time in response to "changing demographics, conflicting societal values, and shifting expectations" (Brown, 2005, p. 83).

1840-1940: Origin of the principalship. Early accounts in history describe schools as ungraded, one-room classrooms run by a handful of teachers (Cuban, 1988;

Brown, 2005). The teachers oversaw schools with slight oversight from local school boards. However, by the mid-eighteenth century, student enrollment increased, and a graded school structure emerged "where students were classified by age and achievement and placed in separate classrooms under a single teacher" (Rousmaniere, 2007, p. 7). Consequently, the graded organizational structure of schools became complex and prompted the need for someone to be in charge. According to Cuban (1988):

> City school boards would appoint a master, head, or principal-teacher to classify students, complete records, care for the furniture and school equipment, hire a janitor, make purchases, distribute supplies, handle the most difficult of the student disciplinary problems, and teach. Principal-teachers still taught three-quarters to fulltime, but they also received more money than teachers, assuring differences in social status. The job was created to give school trustees someone at the school site who would carry out their orders and insure that teachers did what the trustees asked. (p. 53)

However, due to the rising student enrollment, the principal-teachers were relieved from their teaching duties and were given the charge of supervising curriculum and instruction in addition to their administrative duties (Cuban, 1988). Thus, emerged the role of the principal and the "hierarchical, bureaucratic organizational" structure of schools (Brown, 2005, p. 86). According to Rousmaniere (2007), "the creation of the principal's office revolutionized the internal organization of the school from a group of students supervised by one teacher to a collection of teachers managed by one administrator" (p. 1). Thus, the power shifted from the classroom teacher to the principal (Kafka, 2009). It created an image of the principal as the bureaucratic middle-manager who served as a "conduit between the district and the classroom" (Rousmaniere, 2007, p. 2).

Towards the end of the 19th and early 20th century, the role of the principal quickly gained momentum and prestige within the educational system. According to Kafka (2009), principals gained such prestige by earning autonomy to make local school decisions, working towards professionalizing the position through credentialing, and by "increasing their supervisory position over teachers" (p. 322). The latter was indeed an additional catalyst towards the promotion of a principal's prestige and the clear delineation of roles between the principal and teacher (Cuban, 1988; Kafka, 2009). In fact, during the late 1800s, superintendents and school boards expected principals to visit classrooms, provide feedback on lessons, confer with teachers on curriculum design and instructional practices, and evaluate their teaching performance (Kafka, 2009). However, in the early 1900s, schools came under greater pressure to improve academic outcomes of students. As a result, principals were expected to be efficient managers of the organization charged with implementing a standardized school curriculum and monitoring teacher effectiveness (Brown, 2005). Yet, their focus on operational aspects of school took precedence. The actions of the principal became managerial and bureaucratic in nature and further removed principals from their instructional leadership role and more towards autocratic leadership (Brown, 2005).

1940-1960: Democratic principal. With a heavy emphasis on the efficient management of schools and on monitoring teachers in the early 1900s, the role of the principal once again shifted during the mid-twentieth century. Brown (2005) asserted, "The new focus on faculty and staff morale caused the supervisory role of the principalship

to shift from monitoring to providing assistance to teachers to improve instruction, from educational specialist and bureaucrat to facilitator and counselor" (p. 93). The emphasis was back on instructional leadership. Additionally, the principal's role became more prominent in the 1940s as the community looked to schools for teaching American values during World War II. According to Beck and Murphy (1993), the principal was viewed as a "spiritual" and "democratic" leader (as cited in Kafka, 2009, p. 325).

The 1960s ushered in the era of the federal government's role in education during the Civil Rights Movement. In response to the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* court decision, Harris, Ladd, Smith, and West (2016) stated, "the federal government passed an assortment of laws establishing programs, funding, and requirements to educate underprivileged children" (p. 2). Several federally mandated policies and initiatives were put into effect including The Bilingual Education Act in 1968, The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, Title I, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and "The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, together with the Education for All Handicapped Act of 1975 (now the Individuals with Disabilities Act, or IDEA)" (Harris et al., 2016, p. 3). The changes once again brought complexity to the role of principal. On one hand, they were expected to be instructional leaders, yet on the other, they became compliance officers enforcing federal and state policies.

1980-2000: Compliant principal. In 1983 under the Ronald Reagan administration, the report entitled *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* was published by The National Commission on Excellence in Education. The findings of

the report shed light on the then quality of elementary and secondary public schools and cited deficiencies in the taught and assessed curriculum, the expected knowledge and skills of graduates, and the insufficient time spent on active learning. Principals were targeted as one of the reasons for the poor academic performance of students. In response, top-down reform efforts from state-legislators called for "educational leaders to refocus on academic achievement and the preparation of students for the workplace and for principals to engage more actively in leading the school's instructional program and in focusing staff attention on student outcomes" (Brown, 2005, pp. 100-101). However, policymakers pointed to the lack of expertise of principals in curriculum and instruction and urged new principal standards to be developed to improve their instructional leadership (Brown, 2005). The principal's managerial role was to take a backseat and instructional leadership needed to be the driver of improving academic performance. However, the increasing pressures continued well into the 21st century through federally-mandated reform efforts.

2000-Present: Accountable principal. In 2001, No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) made its debut and ushered in another era of federal accountability reform (USDOE, 2001). The goal of NCLB was to improve student outcomes for all students including English-language learners, students in special education, and socio-economically disadvantaged students and to close the academic achievement gap among student groups. Yearly state-standardized tests were administered to measure the academic performance of all students, and if any student group underperformed, the school was held liable and serious sanctions were imposed. NCLB brought greater pressure on school districts and

school principals to improve instruction at schools. The principal role once again shifted to focus on instructional leadership (Brown, 2005). With the recent re-authorization of NCLB in 2015, now titled the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the emphasis on closing achievement gaps between student groups and improving the school's overall success continues to be the assumed work of principals today.

The history of the principalship revealed the many roles a principal has undertaken to lead schools and continue to do so today. They are "managers, administrators, supervisors, instructional leaders, and politicians" in the grand scope of the principalship (Kafka, 2009, p. 329). Which role they perform has been directly in response to the expectations of the federal, state, and local entities and policy reforms (Portin, Schneider, DeArmond, & Gundlach, 2003). As accountability pressures rise, principals once again "find themselves at the nexus of accountability and school improvement with an increasingly explicit expectation that they will function as 'instructional leaders.'" (Hallinger, 2005, p. 222). However, unclear expectations and definitions of instructional leadership have further complicated the role of the principal as an instructional leader.

PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP ROLES

As the historical review of literature presented, the many demands and expectations of the principalship require principals to take on numerous leadership roles. Some of the leadership roles include instructional, transformational, and administrative management.

Instructional leadership. During the 1980s, "instructional leadership emerged as a popular *model of cho*ice" for principals to embrace (Hallinger, 2003, p. 334). Although no clear agreement exists on how to define instructional leadership, according to Marks and Printy (2003), it can simply be defined as "leadership functions directly related to the facilitation of teaching and learning" (p. 373). However, others assert that instructional leadership is any action, instructional or managerial, a principal takes to enhance students' academic growth and to improve teachers' instructional practices (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Hallinger, 2005; Grissom & Loeb, 2011; Marks & Printy, 2003).

Several instructional leadership frameworks have been developed to articulate the functions of an instructional leader (i.e. Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982; CCSSO, 2015; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; The Wallace Foundation, 2013). Researchers Hallinger and Murphy (1985) originally proposed the Instructional Leadership Framework which designated three dimensions for the instructional leadership role of the principal. Hallinger (2003) further refined the dimensions to state the following: 1) "defining the school's mission," 2) "managing the instructional program," and 3) "promoting a positive school-learning climate" (p. 332).

Similarly, The Wallace Foundation (2013) suggested that effective principals employ five key practices that demonstrate instructional leadership. The Wallace Foundation (2013) stated the practices were as follows:

- Shaping a vision of academic success for all students;
- Creating a climate hospitable to education;
- Cultivating leadership in others;
- Improving instruction;

- Managing people, data, and processes to foster school improvement. (p. 4)

Furthermore, the principal's instructional leadership actions can also foster the professional growth and capacity of the teachers leading to increasing student performance. An extensive six-year study conducted by Wahlstrom et al. (2010) concluded that "leadership effects on student learning occur largely because leadership strengthens professional community; teachers' engagement in professional community, in turn, fosters the use of instructional practices that are associated with student achievement" (p. 10). Additionally, through a synthesis of the research on principals, Lemoine, Greer, McCormack, and Richardson (2014), stated that "as an instructional leader, the principal works with curriculum and instruction; the school leader presents focused and on-going professional development, encourages instructional innovations, utilizes proactive change processes, and frequently monitors and evaluates teachers and student learning" (p. 19). Thus, the instructional leadership capacity of the principal is imperative to enhancing the teachers' instructional practice and improving student learning. However, the principal is not only tasked with the role of an instructional leader, but he or she must also practice transformational leadership and administrative management.

Transformational leadership. Transformational leadership emerged as a form of leadership practice nearly four decades ago. Burns (1978) defined transformational leadership as a phenomenon which "occurs when one or more persons *engage* with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality" (p. 20). Leithwood and Jantzi's (2000) approach to transformational

leadership "fundamentally aims to foster capacity development and higher levels of personal commitment to organizational goals on the part of leaders' colleagues" (p. 113). Though the definition of transformational leadership has since evolved, researchers (Balyer, 2012; Leithwood, 1994; Valentine & Prater, 2011) have identified the following characteristics of a transformational school principal as one who:

- Creates a collaborative culture.
- Serves the needs of others.
- Develops talent and leadership capacity.
- Models best practices and communicates respect of others.
- Inspires others and provides support and encouragement.
- Builds a vision, establishes goals, and sets expectations for success.
- Utilizes the expertise and leadership of teachers and staff through collective decision making for school improvement.

Moreover, Valentine and Prater (2011) identified the three most influential transformational leadership factors that have the greatest relationship in increasing student achievement: "providing a model," "identifying a vision," and "fostering group goals" (p. 23). Specifically, Valentine and Prater (2011) stated:

> The three factors involve behavior on the part of the principal that sets an example for staff members to follow consistent with the values the leader espouses, inspiring others with his or her vision of the future, and fostering a group set of goals that transcend personal ambitions. Principals exhibiting these factors are able to genuinely interact with people to lead by doing rather than by simply telling. (p. 23)

Principals who practice transformational leadership break down the bureaucratic red tape of schools and instead promote a culture of collective and shared leadership (Balyer, 2012). Essentially, the principal as a transformational leader fosters a culture of collaboration,

nurtures talent, promotes equity, empowers all, removes barriers and positively impacts the school climate.

Administrative management leadership. Although the ideal principal is the instructional and transformational leader, the individual must also be skilled in managing the day-to-day operations of the school. Miller (2013) stated, "As administrative leaders, principals set budgets, manage the school facility, and develop relationships with the broader community" (p. 60). Through a study of the leadership practices of more than 155 high school principals, Valentine and Prater (2011) found:

> Day-to-day managerial skills such as effectively organizing tasks and personnel, developing rules and procedures, evaluating employees, and providing appropriate information to staff and students are vital to a successful school operation and cannot be overlooked when discussing a comprehensive model of principal leadership. (p. 22)

Principals who are unable to manage the school in the areas described above will certainly find their work to be challenging and may also compromise their instructional leadership capacity and credibility.

PRINCIPAL INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES

The many roles imposed upon the principal can be demanding and require great stamina to carry out the responsibilities of the position. The role of the principal as an instructional leader is hindered many times due to external and internal factors including unclear role expectations, lack of support, and insufficient training.

Unclear role expectations. The role of the principal as an instructional leader or as an administrative manager is highly dependent on the context in which the individual

works and imposed expectations. Authors Fink and Silverman (2014) found that most principals "work in systems that have not developed a consensus understanding of the day-to-day work that principals should be engaged in to affect teaching practice at scale" (p. 23). Similarly, Lemoine et al. (2014) also cited unclear role expectations as a challenge for the principal in carrying out their instructional leadership responsibilities. The authors asserted that the role of the principal since its inception has been a dichotomy between administrative managers and instructional leaders. Although "the management function is critical to the overall operation of the school," the authors stress that "it must not take priority over instruction" (Lemoine et al., 2014, p. 20). According to The Wallace Foundation (2006), principals who excel at:

> Providing a range of support to teachers, creating a supportive team culture in schools in which all adults share successes and challenges in a sympathetic but rigorous way, being vigilant to both good classroom practices and bad ones, and having the courage to challenge long-cherished practices when the facts show they are ineffective, are at the heart of what it means to be an "instructional leader," not just a building manager. (p. 1)

As promising as these practices seem, Horng, Klasik, and Loeb (2010) found that principals devoted much of their time to administrative or management activities over instructionally related responsibilities. In fact, principals spent more than 50% of their time on administrative and organizational management tasks in contrast to only 13% on instructional leadership activities (Horng et al., 2010). Lemoine et al. (2014) cited two additional factors which contribute to principals defaulting to the managerial responsibilities over the instructional: (1) heavier emphasis on the administrative and management role in principal preparation programs and (2) lack of support from central

office and teachers who prioritize the role of the principal as a manager over the instructional leader. As a result, unclear or misguided expectations lead to the dichotomous role of the principal.

Lack of support and authority. Though principals are expected to be instructional leaders, many times they are hindered by competing ideologies of the principalship thus lacking the support and authority needed to lead and improve instruction. In fact, Portin et al. (2003) emphasized that principals "are profoundly affected by the actions of superintendents, district-wide school boards, and central offices. The actions of these groups are, in turn, influenced by federal, state, county, or city government policies and by collective bargaining agreements" (p. 31). Due to these external factors, Portin et al. (2003) also found that "principals were sometimes unable to exert much authority over leadership in areas like instruction (because the district drove the curriculum)" (p. 33). Another external factor is the formal and informal agreements negotiated with teachers which limit the authority of principals in the areas of instructional leadership (Lemoine et al., 2014). Furthermore, some district central offices prefer teachers take on the instructional responsibilities while the principals manage the day-to-day operations of the school. Lastly, too often the bureaucratic policies and top-down management of central office also diminish the decision-making authority of principals.

Insufficient preparation and training. As previous researchers have established, the role of the principal is critical to improving teacher effectiveness and student outcomes; however, this interpretation requires a principal who is not only well-versed in instructional

practices but is also able to manage the day-to-day operational and managerial functions of the school (Grissom & Loeb, 2011; Mendels, 2016). Although aspiring principals must acquire the proper credentials through a state-approved principal preparation program, they may not necessarily be equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills, or dispositions to carry out the role of the principal. Moreover, once a principal has been placed, the individual needs ongoing professional development to improve instructional leadership and administrative practices. Yet the research conducted by Bottoms and O'Neill (2001) found that the "preparation and professional development programs for school leaders are out of sync with our scaled-up expectations" of the role (p. 7). The researchers stated that the principal needs to:

- Have comprehensive understanding of school and classroom practices that contribute to student achievement;
- Know how to work with teachers and others to fashion and implement continuous student improvement; and
- Know how to provide the necessary support for staff to carry out sound school, curriculum and instructional practices. (Bottoms & O'Neill, 2001, p. 8)

These expectations require preparation programs and district-provided professional development to emphasize and further enhance the knowledge and skills needed for principals to be instructional leaders. This challenge has been ongoing for both entities to address and can significantly vary from program to program and district to district.

A study conducted by Wahlstrom et al. (2010) examined the perceptions of principals on the level of support received from district leaders on developing their leadership capacity. The researchers found "little evidence that most districts have a coherent professional development system for principals. Principals tended to agree"

(p. 20). In addition, Wahlstrom et al. (2010) compared the level of support provided in low-performing districts to high performing districts. Principals in the former setting received less targeted professional development to enhance their leadership capacity whereas those in the latter setting experienced a different level of support altogether. Wahlstrom et al. (2010) asserted, "Leaders in higher performing districts communicated explicit expectations for principal leadership and provided learning experiences in line with these expectations; they also monitored principal follow-through and intervened with further support where needed" (p. 21). Wahlstrom et al. (2010) further maintained, "gaps in principals' leadership expertise were identified through ongoing monitoring and discussion with principals about school performance and improvement plans, and through informal advising and coaching interventions" (p. 21). As such, to ensure principal effectiveness, school districts must re-evaluate and re-design how professional development and capacity building training is carried out and by whom, including the principal supervisor.

CENTRAL OFFICE LEADERSHIP

Developing principals' instructional leadership capacity begins at the district central office level. However, Fink and Silverman (2014) cited, "that many districts have given little attention to creating the necessary conditions for principal success" thus effecting "principal job satisfaction and sense of efficacy" (p. 23). Yet, as pressure to improve teaching effectiveness and student outcomes continues to rise, researchers,

policymakers, and school district leaders are recognizing and emphasizing "the importance of: 'instructional leadership' as at least a part of principals' work; intensive, job-embedded supports for helping principals develop their capacity for such leadership; and central offices as key providers of such supports" (Honig, 2012, p. 736). Developing principals' instructional leadership capacity begins with strong performance management systems and support provided by school district central office leaders. Knowing the challenges of the principalship, central office leaders are re-designing program management systems to effectively support principals. Ikemoto et al. (2014) stated the specific conditions central office leaders must ensure are incorporated in an effective performance management system as the following:

- Principal Role Definition. Principals' roles have been defined in a way that is feasible within resource constraints and enables leaders to make teaching and learning a priority;
- Principal Performance. Principal standards are research-based, and the evaluation process is fair, transparent, rigorous, and aligned to the standards;
- Professional Learning. Principal professional learning opportunities are on-going, high-quality, and focused on principals' needs; and
- Principal Managers. Principal supervisors have the capacity and bandwidth to effectively manage and support principals. (p. 22)

The CCSSO (2015) also assert that the role of the principal supervisor is emerging as one imperative to developing principals' instructional leadership capacity:

> Recent research suggests that principal supervisors can positively affect student results by helping principals grow as instructional leaders. With the right training and support, they can assess and evaluate principals' current leadership practices and identify professional learning opportunities most likely to lead to improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and achievement. Moreover, they can ensure that the principals' work and vision align with district goals, and that the central office effectively supports school leaders, schools and student success. (p. 2)

In addition, the CCSSO (2015) also emphasized the position of the principal supervisor as critical to "effective development and exercise of leadership school wide" (p. 4).

According to Miller (2014), "strong schools need strong principals, and strong principals need strong support from the people they report to in the districts' central offices" (p. 14). It is critical for central office leadership to establish systems that "provide principals with on-going supervision and support from highly skilled principal managers who partner with principals to improve student achievement, provide support and a sounding board, and who work to remove barriers to principal success" (Ikemoto et al., 2014, p. 11).

As districts look to transform and redefine the position of the principal supervisor to one of an instructional leader of principals, standards and recommendations have been suggested by researchers to make the transition (CCSSO, 2015; Goldring et al., 2018; Ikemoto et al., 2014). For example, the CCSSO (2015) recently developed the *Model Principal Supervisor Standards (MPSS)* for the principal supervisor position for districts to use as a framework to define the role. The 2015 CCSSO MPSS guide stated eight standards as follows:

- Standard 1. Principal Supervisors dedicate their time to helping principals grow as instructional leaders;
- Standard 2. Principal Supervisors coach and support individual principals and engage in effective professional learning strategies to help principals grow as instructional leaders;
- Standard 3. Principal Supervisors use evidence of principals' effectiveness to determine necessary improvements in principals' practice to foster a positive educational environment that supports the diverse cultural and learning needs of students;

- Standard 4. Principal Supervisors engage principals in the formal district principal evaluation process in ways that help them grow as instructional leaders;
- Standard 5. Principal Supervisors advocate for and inform the coherence of organizational vision, policies and strategies to support schools and student learning;
- Standard 6. Principal Supervisors assist the district in ensuring the community of schools with which they engage are culturally/socially responsive and have equitable access to resources necessary for the success of each student;
- Standard 7. Principal Supervisors engage in their own development and continuous improvement to help principals grow as instructional leaders;
- Standard 8. Principal Supervisors lead strategic change that continuously elevates the performance of schools and sustains high-quality educational programs and opportunities across the district. (pp. 8-9)

The standards clearly list the responsibilities of the principal supervisor instructional leader role; however, whether districts choose to employ these standards is strictly voluntary.

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR LEADERSHIP

Developing principals' instructional leadership capacity has come to the forefront in many school districts across the nation as well as that of the United States Department of Education (USDOE) (Goldring et al., 2018; United States Department of Education (USDOE), 2016). In July 2015, the USDOE reauthorized the NCLB Act of 2001 and renamed it the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Funds provided under ESSA through the Title II Part A program allocate monies for building systems of supports for teachers, principals, and school leaders to improve their capacity to serve students (USDOE, 2016). For the first time, USDOE highlighted the important role of the principal supervisor and has included the position in the Title II Part A program (2016). USDOE (2016) perceives the role of the principal supervisor as the one who fosters principals' capacity to be

instructional leaders first and then to be managers of daily operations and compliance in schools.

Recently, a major study commissioned by the Wallace Foundation focused on the role of the principal supervisor in six urban school districts (Goldring et al., 2018). Each district participated in the Principal Supervisor Initiative (PSI) where attention was given to transforming the principal supervisor position to one that focuses more on the development of principals' instructional leadership capacity thus enhancing principal effectiveness and increasing student achievement outcomes (Goldring et al., 2018). According to the study's findings, "The districts revised the job descriptions for principal supervisors, reduced the span of control, implemented new training programs, and restructured roles and responsibilities in the central office to support changes to the principal supervisor role" (Goldring et al., 2018, p. xii). As a result, the principal supervisors' time and responsibilities were reoriented from working on administrative, operational, and compliance-related tasks to focusing more on "participating in classroom walk-throughs, coaching principals, and providing ongoing feedback" (Goldring et al., 2018, p. xii).

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR ROLES

As the demand increases to raise student performance, the principals are under intense pressure to strengthen their instructional leadership capacity. To fill this need requires coaching, mentoring, and guidance from principal supervisors (CCSSO, 2015;

Goff, Guthrie, Goldring, & Bickman, 2014; Mendels, 2016; Saphier & Durkin, 2011). However, most studies have found that the principal supervisor position is a dichotomy between the role of instructional leader and administrative manager (Burch & Danley, 1980; Corcoran et al., 2013; Honig, 2012).

Instructional leader. The role of instructional leader for principal supervisors has been defined in the extant literature as encompassing responsibilities which support principals in leading their schools. These responsibilities include: brokering services and resources and communicating and clarifying information.

Brokering services and distributing resources. According to extant literature, connecting principals with the services and resources they need to lead schools emerged as a major responsibility of principal supervisors (Burch & Danley, 1980; Corcoran et al., 2013; Honig et al., 2010; Honig, 2012; Ovando & Huckestein, 2003). Honig et al. (2010) define brokering as the principal supervisors "serving as a broker between principals and external resources, by bridging or connecting principals to sources of assistance, and buffering them from negative external influences, both in service of supporting principals' instructional leadership" (p. 19). A study conducted by Honig (2012) in school districts focused on redesigning the work of central office personnel found that the Instructional Leadership Directors (ILD) (also known as principal supervisors) brokered services by "strategically bridging principals to or buffering them from resources and influences" which were external to the direct working relationship between the ILD and the principal (p. 755). The ILDs most often bridged principals to personnel resources including

instructional and operational central office staff and to other principals in the district (Honig, 2012). They also connected principals to external resources for professional learning and training.

Several other studies have also cited brokering of services and distribution of services as role responsibilities of principal supervisors as instructional leaders. Burch and Danley (1980) defined "resource allocation" as "making materials and human resources to those who need them, and facilitating acquisition and distribution of resources" as a role responsibility of central office supervisors (p. 636). Moreover, Corcoran et al. (2013) also observed that "some principal supervisors provide[d] direct technical assistance while others function[ed] more as brokers of central office resources, able to connect principals to instructional or operational specialists depending on the nature of their needs" (p. 34). Researchers Ovando and Huckestein (2003) also cited "resource provider" as an emerging role of central office supervisors in supporting principals (p. 17).

Communicating and clarifying information. Extant literature also cites the responsibility of sharing of instructional information and clearly communicating expectations from central office with principals as another role responsibility of principal supervisors (Burch & Danley, 1980; CCSSO, 2015; Honig, 2012). Researchers Burch and Danley (1980) define this role responsibility as "information and dissemination" which includes actions such as "attending professional meetings, sharing information on new ideas and practices, and providing support to those in need" (p. 636).

Providing clarity of the district's vision, goals, and expectations is another responsibility of principal supervisors as presented and proposed in extant literature (Burch & Danley, 1980; CCSSO, 2015; Honig, 2008; Honig, 2012). For example, Burch and Danley (1980) identified the role of "formal communications" for central office supervisors as one that includes "providing official and policy information to individuals and groups, officially representing the views of the system, and ensuring proper information flow" (p. 636).

In addition, the CCSSO's MPSS standards developed in 2015 suggest that "Principal Supervisors advocate for and inform the coherence of organizational vision, policies and strategies to support schools and student learning" (CCSSO, 2015, p. 8). To support principals in leading their schools, studies have found that principal supervisors assist principals in interpreting ambiguous information from central office (Honig, 2009; Honig, 2012). By principal supervisors clearly communicating the expectations, the principals are better able to engage in instructional leadership work in a more purposeful and tangible way (Honig, 2009; Honig, 2012).

Administrative manager. Though the aim of the principal supervisors' position is to develop principals' instructional leadership capacity, they also spend time managing the administrative and operational aspects of the district central office and schools. Based on existing studies, the principal supervisor's administrative manager responsibilities include: ensuring compliance to policies and addressing crisis and conflicts.

Ensuring compliance to policies. According to existing studies, one of the responsibilities of principal supervisors as administrative managers includes guiding and supporting principals in meeting the requirements of local district and state policies. The CCSSO (2015) found that though principal supervisors' roles are orienting more towards instructional leadership, "traditionally, principal supervisors have focused on ensuring that school leaders, and the buildings they run, complied with local policies and state regulations" (p. 2). Additionally, researchers have also found that principal supervisors are often directed to engage in more compliance-oriented tasks "such as ensuring principals ha[ve] submitted appropriate forms for budgeting and state accountability, checking on the completion of school improvement plans, and monitoring whether Individualized Education Plans [are] up to date" (Goldring et al., 2018, p. 3). Researchers Burch and Danley (1980) define this role responsibility of central office supervisors as "maintenance" which consists of "completing routine reports and paperwork, handling office details and routine correspondence, and follow-up on requests and questions" (p. 637). They also found that central office supervisors spend a generous amount of time in the "maintenance" role (Burch & Danley, 1980, p. 637).

Addressing crisis and concerns. Studies have also concluded that another role responsibility of principal supervisors as administrative managers includes assisting principals in addressing campus crises and attending to student or parent conflicts (Burch & Danley, 1980; Casserly et al., 2013; Goldring et al., 2018). Burch and Danley (1980) identified "crisis management" as role responsibility of principal supervisors (p. 636).

Crisis management is defined as "coping with the day-to-day problems, resolving personnel conflicts, negotiating with others to gain maximum commitment to established priorities and being involved in situations or conflict or controversy" (Burch & Danley, 1980, pp. 636-637). Goldring et al.'s (2018) study asserted that principal supervisors were accountable for resolving issues which had escalated from the campus-level to the district level. Similarly, Casserly et al. (2013) also found that principal supervisors spend time assisting principals in responding to parent and community concerns.

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR PRACTICES

Only a handful of studies have focused on the practices principal supervisors utilize to enhance the instructional leadership capacity of principals (Goldring et al., 2018; Honig, 2008; Honig et al., 2010; Honig, 2012; Ovando & Huckestein, 2003; Thessin et al., 2018). These studies have identified some notable practices employed by principal supervisors that strengthen principals' skills as instructional leaders. These practices include: coaching and modeling, providing training and professional development, collaborating through joint work, differentiating support, and conducting campus and classroom walk-throughs.

Coaching and modeling. According to studies (Burch & Danley, 1980; Casserly et al., 2013; Honig, 2012; Thessin et al., 2018) and suggested standards (CCSSO, 2015), both coaching and modeling emerged as a practice employed by principal supervisors to support principals with instructional leadership. The practice of coaching means "[t]o train, tutor or give instruction in order to enhance a person's growth and performance, as

well as promote individual responsibility and accountability" (CCSSO, 2015, p. 23). The CCSSO (2015) suggests that by "[u]sing their coaching skills, principal supervisors evaluate and address the developmental needs of principals and collaborate with them to create a professional learning plan that will help them gain the necessary skills to become better instructional leaders" (p. 23).

A study conducted by Thessin et al. (2018) found that principal supervisors employed the practice of coaching with the goal of "developing the principal's capacity to develop others" on their campus (p. 10). This practice most often occurred in "one-on-one coaching sessions" with the principals (Thessin et al., 2018, p. 10). Other studies also identified coaching as a practice employed by principal supervisors (Casserly et al., 2013; Goldring et al., 2018). For instance, a study of principal supervisors in six urban school districts found coaching to be a main practice between the principal and their supervisor (Goldring et al., 2018). The principal supervisors in the study "described coaching in terms of conversations about observing instruction, providing feedback about instruction, responding to instructional issues in the building, using data, and other problems of practice" (Goldring et al., 2018, p. 38).

Another practice the principal supervisors employ to develop principals' leadership capacity is modeling (Honig et al., 2010; Honig, 2012). Modeling is defined as demonstrating "instructional leadership thinking and action" (Honig et al., 2010, p. 23). Honig's (2012) research study found that "some ILDs [principal supervisors] . . . explicitly modeled or demonstrated how to act like an instructional leader as a strategy for

strengthening principals' instructional leadership" (p. 751). Those ILDs who were consistent in the practice demonstrated for principals how to facilitate dialogue with teachers on improving instruction in the classroom (Honig, 2012).

Providing training and professional development. Several studies cited providing training and professional development as another practice employed by principal supervisors to develop principals' skills in the areas of instructional leadership (Burch & Danley, 1980; Casserly et al., 2013; Ovando & Huckestein, 2003). According to Burch and Danley (1980), providing "training and development" includes "assisting others in acquiring desired competencies . . . [and] conducting and planning inservice" (p. 636). Similarly, a study by Ovando and Huckestein (2003) found providing "staff development" as an emerging practice among central office supervisors in exemplary Texas school districts (p. 16). In another study "most [principal] supervisors reportedly included professional development and/or job-embedded learning opportunities" to develop principals' instructional leadership capacity (Goldring et al., 2018, p. 39).

Collaborating through joint work. A few studies noted that principal supervisors established close professional relationships with the principals through the practice of collaboration and joint work (Goldring et al., 2018; Honig, 2012; Thessin et al., 2018). According to Honig (2012), the practice of joint work is defined as "participants in assistance relationships (e.g., central office administrators) help deepen others' participation in particular work practices (e.g., principals' engagement in instructional leadership" (p. 739). Honig's (2012) study concluded that the practice of joint work

involved a partnership approach on behalf of the ILDs (principal supervisors). Through this practice, the ILDs "help[ed] principals come to value their own development as instructional leaders, rather than to engage in instructional leadership work such as classroom observations as a matter of compliance" (Honig, 2012, p. 747). The ILDs who employed the partnership approach also began joint work with principals based on a problem of practice the principals themselves identified as an area they wanted to grow their leadership capacity in as instructional leaders (Honig, 2012). In addition, these ILDs also "reinforced the *joint* nature of the work by underscoring for principals through their communications and their actions that strengthening principals' instructional leadership was the main work for the principal as well as for them" (Honig, 2012, p. 748). This practice involved "identifying next steps for both the principal and themselves in helping the principal focus on improving instruction" and formalizing it through some system of written communication (Honig, 2012, p. 748).

Findings from a study conducted by Thessin et al. (2018) confirmed Honig's (2012) conclusions about principal supervisors employing the practice of joint work. According to the researchers, the partnership work between the principal supervisor and the principals was viewed as a high impact practice in supporting the development of principals as instructional leaders. Specifically, the researchers found, "[e]ngagement in joint work included planning meetings together, designing and/or providing professional development to school staff and teams, reflecting on and planning next steps together, and at times, divvying up the work to get it done" (Thessin et al., 2018, p. 8).

Similarly, school districts that transformed the role of the principal supervisors in six urban school districts to focus more on developing principals' instructional leadership capacity found that principal supervisors employed more collaborative practices when interacting with principals (Goldring et al., 2018). As a result, the principals reported a "close working relationship and familiarity with their [principal] supervisors" (Goldring et al., 2018, p. 39). Furthermore, the study also noted that the "principals found that their supervisors knew what was going on in the principals' schools, understood the principals' goals, and perceived their own success as linked to that of their principals" (Goldring et al., 2018, p. 39).

Differentiating support. According to some studies, to meet the unique needs of the principals, the principal supervisors often differentiate the type and level of support (Honig, 2012). Differentiating, according to Honig et al. (2010), encompasses consistently providing "supports for principals' instructional leadership" (p. 23). Findings from Honig's (2012) study suggest that the ILDs (principal supervisors) utilized various sources of data to identify the specific areas of support and the areas in which principals exceled to differentiate the strategies used to develop their instructional leadership capacity. The study also concluded that for principals who needed extra support, some ILDs worked closely with them and provided in-depth guidance whereas other ILDs responded with shallow levels of support where the principal mostly directed the dialogue and debrief (Honig, 2012). Additionally, most ILDs differentiated support and allocated more time for novice principals and for those principals leading low-performing schools (Honig, 2012).

Thessin et al. (2018) also found that principal supervisors differentiated support for their principals; however, this practice occurred mostly without the principals being aware or notified. Similarly, Goldring et al. (2018) also reported that some principal supervisors differentiated support through coaching "based upon their assessment of principals' needs" (p. 39). Yet, the study also found that the practice of differentiating supports for principals was especially difficult to employ due to "limited support and guidance" for principal supervisors (Goldring et al., 2018, p. 42). Moreover, the findings revealed that some principal supervisors prioritized differentiated support for their most challenging schools over others assigned to them (Goldring et al., 2018).

Conducting classroom walk-throughs. Several studies cited visiting campuses and conducting classroom observations with the principals as a practice employed by principal supervisors (Burch & Danley, 1980; Casserly et al., 2013; Goldring et al., 2018; Honig, 2012; Thessin et al., 2018). This practice of walk-throughs as described by Goldring et al. (2018) "generally included joint observations of instruction followed by a debriefing" (p. 36).

However, studies have also identified a large variance in the impact and fidelity of principal supervisors conducting classroom walk-throughs with principals. For example, Thessin et al. (2018) found that when conducting school visits, the principal supervisors "had a clear purpose and were aligned to this ongoing school improvement work in which the principal and principal supervisor were engaged" (p. 10). Additionally, "each visit had a focus . . . [and] intended outcomes were identified for each visit" (Thessin et al., 2018, p. 10). On the other hand, researchers Goldring et al. (2018) and Honig (2012) concluded

that discrepancies existed among principal supervisors in how they conducted walk-throughs. In a study of principal supervisors, Goldring et al. (2018) reported that some principal supervisors "conducted unhelpful walk-throughs with no apparent agenda" (p. 42). Similarly, Honig (2012) also found that while some ILDs (principal supervisors) deeply engaged in dialogue with the principals when debriefing on the observation evidence, others briefly conversed with the principals and left them to determine next steps on their own.

Lastly, in some cases the practice of walk-throughs was viewed more as compliance check as opposed to one employed to develop principals' instructional leadership capacity (Goldring et al., 2018; Honig, 2012). For instance, a study by Goldring et al. (2018) of principal supervisors in six urban school districts found that "some [principal] supervisors reportedly approached walk-throughs as an approach to oversight rather than principal coaching, and their principals similarly viewed walk-throughs as an exercise in compliance" (p. 36).

As the extant literature revealed, principal supervisors employ several practices to develop principals' instructional leadership capacity. Additional practices have also been identified; however, they are limited to the findings of one or two studies. For example, Honig (2012) identified "developing and using tools" as another practice utilized by the ILDs (principal supervisors) (p. 753). Developing and using tools involves the use of materials that support principals' engagement in instructional leadership (Honig, 2012). These tools included: "rubrics, worksheets and self-evaluation tools" and tools designed to conduct classroom observations or to analyze data (Honig, 2012, p. 753). ILDs who were consistent in this practice used the tools with a defined purpose and focus on a specific area

of teaching and learning and asked principals to show evidence and data on how they were making progress.

Another practice employed by principal supervisors identified by Casserly et al. (2013) included "conversing with principals about student performance data" (p. 2). Motivating others also emerged as a practice. According to Burch and Danley (1980), motivation consists of "encouraging consideration of new ideas, working with individuals and groups to effect needed changes, being an idea stimulator with others, providing positive reinforcement for efforts and accomplishment; and participating in system activities that influence goals" (p. 636). Similarly, Ovando and Huckestein (2003) identified "providing ideas, support and encouragement" as a practice employed by central office supervisors (p. 17). Finally, the *2015 Model Principal Supervisor Standards* developed by the CCSSO in 2015 suggest that principal supervisors should "[b]uild relationships with principals based on the knowledge of adult learning theory, common goals, trust, support and mutual accountability" (p. 16).

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR CHALLENGES

Like the principal's role, principal supervisor's roles and practices are also affected by external and internal factors. Principal supervisors, too, find themselves impacted by unclear role expectations and insufficient preparation, training, and expertise. They also encounter challenges related to the assigned span of control which determines the scope of their work.

Unclear role expectations. A major challenge faced by principal supervisors entails ambiguous role expectations of their work. Several studies have found that principal supervisors may be reluctant to carry out instructional leadership development practices or provide the necessary support due to their own lack of understanding of their role or expertise (Burch & Danley, 1980; Honig, 2012; Saltzman, 2016; Saphier & Durkin, 2011). Similar to the role of the principal, a principal supervisor's role as an instructional leader or as an administrative manager is highly dependent on the context in which the individual works and the imposed expectations. This confusion may be due to unclear communication from those who direct the work of the principal supervisors. In a study conducted by Honig (2012), the findings revealed that districts failed to provide "an explicit definition of how ILDs (principal supervisors) should go about that work or what specifically the work of principals' instructional leadership involved" (p. 760).

Studies also found that principal supervisors may intentionally choose to focus their time and attention on the compliance and operational aspects of their job over developing the principals' instructional leadership capacity (Burch & Danley, 1980; Corcoran et al., 2013; Honig, 2012; Saltzman, 2016). Researchers Burch and Danley (1980) found internal and external factors which contributed to how principal supervisors spent their time. The authors cited the "poor management of time" as a self-imposed internal factor and "unclear job expectations" and "unexpected demands" as external factors which resulted in less time directed towards instructional improvement (Burch & Danley,1980, p. 637). Similarly, Honig (2012) also found prioritization on issues other than instructional matters to be the

case in a study of ILDs (principal supervisors) where some choose operational responsibilities such as "personnel disciplinary hearings" and issues concerning school facilities over time spent supporting and developing principals' instructional leadership skills (p. 759). As such, Honig (2012) "considered the choices in the previous examples a mismanagement of this trade-off by these ILDs" (p. 759).

Additionally, according to researchers, the titles, roles, and job responsibilities of principal supervisors are inconsistent across the nation, within states, and school districts adding to the challenge of unclear role expectations (CCSSO, 2015). Numerous position titles exist for the principal supervisor across school districts. These often include: area superintendent, executive director, area director, zone superintendent, instructional superintendent, area leadership director, network leader, instructional director, central office administrator or supervisor, principal manager, and others (Corcoran et al., 2013; Honig, 2012).

Based on their findings, the researchers recommend that the principal supervisor's role expectations are clearly stated in board policies (Burch & Danley, 1980; Corcoran et al., 2013). Additionally, the researchers also suggest that the job description needs to be revised and should underscore their responsibilities as instructional leaders (Burch & Danley, 1980; Corcoran et al., 2013).

Insufficient preparation, training, and expertise. Another challenge encountered by principal supervisors, according to studies, includes inadequate

preparation, training, and expertise for the position (Corcoran et al., 2013; Ikemoto et al., 2014). Ikemoto et al. (2014) observed:

> Unfortunately, many principal manager positions are filled by individuals who were not successful principals. Even when some were excellent principals, they often were not automatically good at managing other principals. They often need to develop skills that are new and different from the skills they used as a principal. (p. 26)

Additionally, most principal supervisors find themselves devoting more attention and time to the administrative/managerial aspects of their jobs over instructional practices like the school principals (Burch & Danley, 1980; Honig, 2012; Ikemoto et al., 2014). The lack of focus on instructional responsibilities is mostly due to an absence of a clearly defined and articulated vision of the principal supervisor position by district central offices and the practice of hiring former principals to occupy the position (Honig, 2012; Ikemoto et al., 2014). Ikemoto et al. (2014) asserted, "As a result, some individuals currently in these roles—whether or not they have past experience as principals—may lack instructional leadership expertise or lack the skills to coach or develop principals" (p. 25).

To be successful, principal supervisors should have "skills related to setting and monitoring principal goals, facilitating group networks and communities of practice, coaching, providing feedback on leadership practices, and evaluating principals as well as those who understand the critical practices of effective school leadership" (Ikemoto et al., 2014, p. 26). Moreover, preferably, districts should hire principal supervisors who "understand and share the district's research-based vision of effective leadership, including the importance of instructional leadership, talent management, and culture building skills"

and have been "successful in implementing these practices" as principals themselves (Ikemoto et al., 2014, p. 25).

Furthermore, according to Corcoran et al (2013) "principal supervisors sometimes lack the background and expertise to effectively and equitably support all of the schools they supervise" (p. 28). The researchers found that "a principal supervisor with experience at the high school level may be responsible for overseeing elementary school principals, or a principal supervisor may not [be] prepared to support struggling schools or schools with large ELL populations" (Corcoran et al., 2013, p. 28). However, principal supervisors are not necessarily provided with the training they need to acquire these new skills needed to develop principals' instructional leadership capacity. In fact, through interviews of principal supervisors working in urban school districts, Corcoran et al. (2013) discovered that most professional development and training provided was "ad hoc" and rarely "focused enough on expanding principal supervisors' knowledge of curriculum and instruction" (p. 30). Instead, the principal supervisors in the study sought out professional development and training on their own which may or may not be aligned with the skills they need to develop their own or their principals' instructional leadership capacity. On the other hand, Goldring et al. (2018) found that in some school districts principal supervisor "training had greater emphasis on monitoring and assessing high quality instruction, rather than developing principals as instructional leaders" (p. 29). As a result, the principal supervisors lack the instructional leadership skills to guide and support principals' instructional leadership development (Goldring et al., 2018). According to Ikemoto et al.

(2014), "Greater clarity and guidance on the role of principal managers is a helpful first step, but it must be accompanied with access to opportunities for professional growth" (p. 26).

Span of control. Another challenge for principal supervisors related to the number of principals they were assigned to supervise and the additional administrative/operational responsibilities to which they must attend. A study conducted by Corcoran et al. (2013) determined that the number of principals assigned per principal supervisor varies from district to district. On average, in urban school districts across the nation, each principal supervisor typically oversaw 24 principals (Corcoran et al., 2013). Additionally, the district's organizational structure also determined how principal supervisors were assigned their caseload of schools to oversee which also varied from district to district (Corcoran et al., 2013). In one school district, the principal supervisor oversaw schools within one or more feeder patterns, whereas in another, the principal supervisors were assigned schools "by grade level – elementary, middle, and high school" (Corcoran et al., 2013, p. 13). Also, in other school districts, Corcoran et al., (2013) found that the principal supervisors were given the responsibility of supervising principals leading schools in geographically located areas.

Honig's (2012) study further explained the effect of having too many principals on a single principal supervisor's caseload:

> [D]ue to the high numbers of principals for whom they [principal supervisors] were responsible, they could not allocate all the time to supporting each principal that such work demanded. Instead, they spent time where they reported the need was, in their words, "greatest" or "most urgent." (p. 750)

Additionally, Corocran et al. (2013) also found that principal supervisors performed numerous operational, technical, and administrative responsibilities in addition to their instructional leader role. A study conducted by Burch and Danley (1980) found that central office supervisors (principal supervisors) in Tennessee spent just a little over half of their time in roles aimed at improving instruction and the remaining time on operational roles. Findings from Goldring et al.'s (2018) study cited that "[Principal] [s]upervisors were heavily involved in operational issues, such as building maintenance, and tasked with resolving issues that schools could not handle on their own" (p. 5). Specifically, the study found that "[s]ome districts also expected supervisors to work on principal development, instruction, and school improvement. However, work on discipline, maintenance, school climate, parent complaints, budget oversight, and attendance monitoring regularly superseded these responsibilities" (Goldring et al., 2018, p. 5).

The researchers recommend that "if principal supervisors are to provide personalized, hands-on support, districts should work to (1) narrow principal supervisors' spans of control, and (2) limit the competing responsibilities that shift a principal supervisors' attention away from their work in schools" (Corcoran et al., 2013, p. 52). In fact, six urban school districts which participated in the Principal Supervisor Initiative spearheaded by The Wallace Foundation have not only taken the vital step of "reducing principal supervisors' span of control (the number of principals they oversee) and changing how supervisors are assigned to principals" but also are "revising the principal supervisors' job description to focus on instructional leadership" (Goldring et al., 2018, p. 3). In

addition, Hanover Research (2012) suggests that those assigned to schools should be "experts in the specific needs, strengths, goals, and character of each individual school in their case load" and be able "to provide high-quality, responsive services appropriate to their individual schools" (p. 4).

Political power tensions. Researchers Goldring et al. (2018) found that principal supervisors' work was hindered by the politics at central office. The term politics, according to the principal supervisors in a study by Goldring et al. (2018), is defined as "the informal brokering of power" (p. 57). Due to the political tensions at the central office level, "[principal] [s]upervisors worked to shield principals from political issues that would detract from their leadership" (Goldring et al., 2018, p. 57). In some instances, principal supervisors relied on informal relationships within central office to work around the political barriers to support principals (Goldring et al., 2018). The study also found that principal supervisors new to their position were at a "relative disadvantage, as a lack of familiarity with other individuals in the central office prevented them from effectively supporting their principals" (Goldring et al., 2018, p. 57).

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR RESPONSE TO CHALLENGES

Extant literature on how principal supervisors address challenges is limited; however, Honig (2012) found that principal supervisors (or ILDs as referred to in the study) who were intentionally focused on developing the instructional leadership capacity of

principals used some strategies to mitigate a few of the barriers and issues. Some of these findings were confirmed in a study conducted by researchers Thessin et al. (2018).

Prioritizing time with principals. According to Honig (2012), finding time to support all the principals posed as a challenge for the ILDs (principal supervisors). To address this challenge, the ILDs developed weekly schedules to conduct school visits and made efforts to see each principal at least twice a month (Honig, 2012). Outside of scheduled "face-to-face meetings" with principals, the ILDs utilized other interactions including "e-mail exchanges, phone calls, and brief visits" to communicate with and support principals (Honig, 2012, p. 761). Researchers Goldring et al. (2018) and Thessin et al. (2018) confirmed these findings and concluded that principal supervisors utilized methods other than face-to-face interactions to connect with principals. Specifically, Thessin et al. (2018) found that "the principal supervisor visited the school on a consistent basis and was available for support via multiple modes of communication in between school visits" (p. 9). Other methods of communication included text, phone calls, and emails (Goldring et al., 2018; Thessin et al., 2018). Lastly, to support ILDs in protecting their time, some school districts implemented "blackout days" so that ILDs can direct their attention to working closely with principals (Honig, 2012, p. 762).

Employing previous role experiences. Principal supervisors who did not have a clear understanding of their position, role, and practices relied on previous experiences to support them (Honig, 2012). These experiences "included work with other adults as learners either as coaches for principals or others or as principals who focused on teacher

learning" (Honig, 2012, p. 760). The study also found that principal supervisors' understanding of their role and work was influenced by their peers with whom they met frequently (Honig, 2012).

SUMMARY

This chapter presented the existing literature review on the principal supervisor's role, challenges, and practices in developing principals' instructional leadership capacity. It provided an overview of the historical development of the principal's role in public education, highlighting key events that influenced the evolution of the principal's role since the mid-nineteenth century including World War II in the 1940s, the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, the publication of *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* in 1983, the federal accountability reform mandates of No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2001, and the reauthorization of NCLB to Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015. The chapter presented a review of the challenges which hinder the principal's role as an instructional leader such as unclear role expectations, lack of support and authority, and insufficient preparation and training as well as the role of the central office in transforming the traditional administrative principal supervisory role to one more oriented towards developing instructional leadership capacity. The literature highlighted the critical role of the principal supervisor as the leading factor in increasing principal effectiveness.

The role of the principal supervisor was also examined. Many of the studies found inconsistencies in the roles and responsibilities of the principal supervisor and concluded that though principal supervisors are to be instructional leaders they tend to default to their more traditional role of administrative manager. Moreover, the findings also pointed to some frameworks and standards that can be used to clarify and define the roles and responsibilities of the principal supervisor; however, they are strictly voluntary and discretionary for district central offices to adopt.

Further a review of the practices employed by principal supervisors to develop principals' instructional leadership capacity was also completed. Though the number of studies is limited in this area, they all suggest that principal supervisors work jointly with principals to enhance their performance. Some of the practices entail coaching and modeling, providing training and professional development, collaborating through joint work, differentiating support, and conducting classroom walk-throughs.

In addition, the challenges of the principal supervisor in developing principals' instructional leadership capacity were described. Similar to the challenges of the principal, the principal supervisor's unclear role expectations, lack of sufficient preparation and training, and overly broad span of control were major contributors. Some studies also found that principal supervisors themselves lack the necessary skills to mentor, coach, or develop others due to poor role preparation and ongoing support. Moreover, the studies also emphasize the need for quality professional development that is aligned with the expectations of the role.

Finally, this review included an analysis of how principal supervisors respond to some of the challenges they encounter. Though the research in this area is limited, the strategies used to overcome the challenges include relying on previous experiences to guide their work, dedicating protected time to meet with principals, carefully selecting which requests to respond to, and having central office support their efforts in protecting their time.

As the literature review suggests, the research on principal supervisors is beginning to emerge yet is still limited in scope. In fact, most of the studies have been conducted within districts participating in a leadership redesign initiative commissioned by external sources such as the Wallace Foundation. These initiatives aimed to support school districts with specific training or frameworks to enhance the role of the principal supervisor as the instructional leader. Therefore, generalizability of such findings may not extend to other school districts where actions have not been taken to intentionally redefine the role of the principal supervisor exclusively to better support the development of principals' instructional leadership capacity. However, the studies do suggest that more exploration is needed to understand the role of the principal supervisor and the practices they employ to develop principals' instructional leadership capacity. Further studies also need to be conducted on the challenges they encounter and how they address them.

Chapter 3 presents the study's methodology, including the design, sample population criteria, data collection instruments, and the data collection and analysis procedures used.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Previous research suggests that principal supervisors are the support needed to develop principals' instructional leadership capacity (Burch & Danley, 1980; CCSSO, 2015; Corcoran et al., 2013; Honig et al. 2010; Honig, 2012; Leithwood et al., 2004; Miller, 2014). However, there is limited research on what the role of the principal supervisor does. Therefore, this study focused on principal supervisors at the central office level. This chapter includes the research method and design, the descriptions of the population and sample, the data collection instruments, researcher preparation, positionality, bias, data collection procedures, and data analysis.

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore the principal supervisors' role, the practices employed, and the challenges encountered in developing principals' instructional leadership capacity. The study also explored how the principal supervisors overcome some of the surfaced challenges. Saphier and Durkin (2011) state, "those of us focused on systemic reform need now to turn our attention and accumulated learning to creating and empowering pivotal players in improving our schools— those who supervise principals" (para. 6).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What role do principal supervisors play in developing principals' instructional leadership capacity?

2. What practices do principal supervisors employ to develop principals' instructional leadership capacity?
3. What challenges do principal supervisors encounter in developing principals' instructional leadership capacity and how do they address them?

RESEARCH METHOD AND DESIGN

This exploratory, qualitative study employed the grounded theory approach. The researcher utilized the interpretivist paradigm within a framework of social constructivism. Crotty (1998) states that the interpretivist lens allows the researcher "to understand and explain human and social reality" (p. 67). On the other hand, constructivism "points up the unique experience of each of us" (Crotty, 1998, p. 58). According to Creswell (2014):

> Social constructivists hold assumptions that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. Individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences—meanings directed toward certain objects or things. These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas. (p. 8)

Both the interpretivist and social constructivist paradigms fall within the framework of this qualitative research since the study explores the views of participants in their place of work.

Qualitative methods have strengths which appeal to their use in research studies by investigators as suggested by Creswell (2007): (1) qualitative research, allows the researcher to have face-to-face interaction with the participants and observe them in their natural setting, (2) researcher may gain a deeper insight into the meanings participants hold about the phenomenon of study, and (3) qualitative methods allow for flexibility in the design of the study. Creswell (2007) states that "the initial plan for research cannot be

tightly prescribed and that all phases of the process may change or shift after the researchers enter the field and begin to collect data" (p. 39). In fact, a researcher may modify the questions, the data collection process, or may choose different or additional sites to study (Creswell, 2007). Lastly, the researcher is able to collect multiple perspectives and provide detailed information on the problem of study. Conversely, the weaknesses of qualitative methods include limited generalizability of the findings due to a small sample size, and data collection can be a time-consuming process (Creswell, 2007). In addition, the researcher's bias is inherent and cannot be avoided in a qualitative research study but can be minimized.

As participants described their roles, the researcher was able to gain insight on how participants make meaning of their role in developing principals' instructional leadership capacity. The use of qualitative methods allows the researcher "to explore how meanings are formed and transformed" and "to explore the inner experiences of participants" (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 5). Since the study sought to understand the experiences of principal supervisors, the use of qualitative methods was most appropriate.

According to Strauss and Corbin (1994), "[g]rounded theory is a general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analyzed" where "theory evolves during actual research, and it does this through continuous interplay between analysis and data collection" (p. 273). In short, no pre-existing theoretical frameworks are utilized to analyze the data, but one is generated based on the data found throughout the extent of the study. Though some standards (CCSSO,

2015) and a conceptual framework (Honig, 2012) have been developed by some researchers, the actual role, challenges, and practices of principal supervisors' in their respective places of work still need to be explored (Honig, 2012). The grounded theory approach will allow the researcher to interact with the participants who have in-depth knowledge and are able to provide a narrative of the concept being studied (Charmaz, 2014b). As Creswell (2007) explains, "participants in the study would all have experienced the process, and the development of the theory might help explain practice or provide a framework for further research" (p. 63). This approach is especially important when theories are just beginning to emerge, and although the literature may present some models, they may not have been tested on the specific sample or population the researcher is interested in studying (Creswell, 2007). In some previous studies, the participants have been part of a specific program aimed at developing the principal supervisor role with specific training or frameworks of practice (Casserly et al. 2013; Corcoran et al., 2013; Goldring et al., 2018; Honig et al., 2010).

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The study used purposive sampling to select principal supervisors in Texas for the interviews and observations using a set of pre-determined criteria (Hays & Singh, 2012; Patton, 2002). Purposive sampling allows the researcher to select "information-rich cases . . . from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the

purpose of the inquiry" (Patton, 2002, p. 273). The site and participants were chosen based on specific criteria.

SITE SELECTION

The sites for the study included multiple school districts in the state of Texas with a minimum of 9,999 students. The size of the districts was determined by using the public information provided by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) (2017a). Smaller districts were excluded due to the variability of the principal supervisor role which may likely be conducted by the superintendent or another central office administrator who may have other duties assigned in addition to supervising principals. The criteria for the selected districts also included having a position specific to the role of the principal supervisor for the last three consecutive years. Additionally, the researcher also selected districts with varying organizational structures including feeder pattern division of schools or by a grouping of schools based on similar characteristics (i.e., elementary and secondary).

PARTICIPANT SELECTION

This study included participants who may or may not have received formal training or were given specific frameworks or standards to follow in establishing their roles or the practices they must employ to develop principals' instructional leadership capacity. As the literature indicates, the research on the role of principal supervisors is just beginning to emerge and needs further exploration and theory development.

The principal supervisors selected for the study were each employed in a Texas school district for the last three consecutive years as principal supervisors. This criterion allowed the researcher to collect in-depth knowledge from principal supervisors who are familiar with their role, the district's instructional leadership expectations, and the role expectations of their principals and their evaluation. A total of three participants were interviewed and observed for the study.

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

For the aims of this study, semi-structured interviews, pertinent document reviews, and observations were used. Theory sampling was used for data collection purposes. Glaser and Strauss (1967) define theory sampling as "the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyzes his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges" (p. 45). Grounded theory allows greater flexibility in the data collection process where the researcher can adjust the subsequent data collection based on tentative theoretical findings. As Corbin and Strauss (1990) explain, "in order not to miss anything" during the study "the investigator must analyze the first bits of data for cues" and "all seemingly relevant issues must be incorporated into the next set of interviews and observations" (p. 6). For the purposes of this study, the researcher immediately engaged with the data collected from the first interview and adjusted as needed for the subsequent interviews based on the arising themes or categories.

In semi-structured interviews, "[a] guide is used, with questions and topics that must be covered" (Harrell & Bradley, 2009, p. 27). Although a guide is developed with specific questions to be asked, in semi-structured interviews the researcher has the autonomy to ask the questions out of sequential order and conduct the interview in a conversational style (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). According to Harrell and Bradley (2009), "semi-structured interviews are often used when the researcher wants to delve deeply into a topic and to understand thoroughly the answers provided" (p. 27). Charmaz (2014a) suggests that in grounded theory "interviewing is a flexible, emergent technique" (p. 58). Charmaz (2014a) stated this method entails the following attributes:

- Combines flexibility and control;
- Opens interactional space for ideas and issues to arise;
- Allows possibilities for immediate follow-up on these ideas and issues;
- Results from interviewers and interview participants' co-construction of the interview conversation. (pp. 58-59)

The semi-structured interview guide began with questions to establish participants' profiles. The questions elicited information regarding demographic information, professional background of the participant, and the organizational structure of the school district. The latter questions provided insight on the participants' perception of their role in the larger organizational context of the district.

A review of pertinent documents including district organizational charts, principal supervisor's job descriptions, evaluation tools, meeting agendas, and other relevant guiding documents or frameworks which may highlight the district's expectation on instructional leadership were analyzed. These documents added depth and knowledge in developing a

profile of the context in which the principal supervisors work and the expectations they are held to regarding developing principals' instructional leadership. Lastly, a review of the principal supervisor job descriptions allowed the researcher to compare if the practices of principal supervisors align to the responsibilities given in developing principals' leadership capacity.

RESEARCHER PREPARATION, POSITIONALITY, AND BIAS

The researcher was prepared in the methods of conducting qualitative studies through coursework in a doctoral level program. The courses included qualitative methods and systems of human inquiry. In addition, the researcher was in a central office administrator position for the past five years in a public-school district. The researcher works closely with the principal supervisors in one of the districts. The researcher adopted the interpretivist and social constructivist paradigm for the analysis of data. In addition, the researcher was a doctoral student in a Superintendency program.

Given the possibility of bias due to a close working relationship with principal supervisors, the researcher employed strategies to reduce predispositions to expected outcomes by journaling and having participants review their responses. Journaling allowed the researcher to capture the thoughts, feelings, and reactions during the interview process and data analysis. Notes were taken during the interviews to record the researcher's reactions to participants' answers. The researcher also employed member checks and had

the participants review their responses after transcription to ensure validity and transparency of the research process.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

Once the treatise committee approved the study, the researcher submitted a request for approval from the Institutional Review Board of the University of Texas at Austin. The proposal sought permission to interview participants and to obtain approval of the interview protocol. The researcher also sought approval for the study in each of the respective districts chosen for the study. After approval was obtained, the researcher conducted a pilot study with non-participating members to test the interview protocol. This process allowed the researcher to confirm the validity and reliability of the interview guide and make modifications accordingly.

Once the district approvals were obtained, the researcher identified possible principal supervisor participants and contacted them by phone, email, or in-person. The researcher informed the identified participants of the study and invited them to participate in the interview and observation process. Participants who agreed to participate in the study were provided with pertinent consent forms and a letter explaining the purpose of the study.

The time and place of the interviews were set according to the participant's availability and convenience. Prior to beginning the interviews, the researcher provided paper copies of the consent form from the Institutional Review Board and an explanatory

letter about the purpose of the study. After the researcher was introduced, the topics for discussion were reviewed with the participant. Although the researcher utilized the semi-structured interview guide to facilitate the process, additional questions or follow-up questions were asked as the interviews proceeded.

The interviews lasted approximately 60 to 75 minutes in length for each participant and were recorded with the participant's permission. The researcher employed a transcribing service to create the transcripts of the recorded interviews. Participants were provided a copy of their interview question responses for member check purposes. This opportunity allowed the participant to verify, correct, clarify, or add to their responses. The researcher also conducted observations of principal supervisors specifically with the principals they supervise. The observations occurred over one to two days when the researcher observed the participants interacting with principals and any other district staff in various settings including meetings and professional development sessions.

DATA ANALYSIS

Once the interviews and transcriptions were completed, the researcher began the data analysis process using several qualitative grounded theory strategies: coding, memoing, analytical questioning, comparative analysis, and negative cases searches. Unlike other qualitative research methods, the data analysis in grounded theory begins immediately after the first interview to inform the subsequent interviews (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 1990). First, open coding was used in this study. Open coding is "the

process of putting tags, names, or labels against pieces of the data" (Punch, 2009, p. 176). The pieces of data may include single words, short phrases, sentences, paragraphs, or entire documents (Punch, 2009). The researcher conducted a line-by-line review of the interview transcripts and group statements by themes based on a set of low-inference codes derived from the theoretical and conceptual framework. Although the coding began with a prespecified list of codes, the researcher aimed to "remain alert to other labels and categories suggested by the data" (Punch, 2009, p. 176).

Second, the researcher also employed the use of memoing simultaneously while coding. Memoing according to Glaser (1978) "is the theorising write-up of ideas about codes and their relationships as they strike the analyst while coding…it can be a sentence, a paragraph or a few pages" (as cited in Punch, 2009, p. 180). By memoing in conjunction with coding, the researcher was able to extend beyond initial coding to identify themes and patterns.

Third, the researcher asked analytical questions to guide the coding and interview process and become aware of emerging concepts, themes, or patterns in the data. "Asking such questions enables the researcher to be sensitive to new issues and more likely to take notice of their empirical implications" (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 12). Fourth, the use of comparative analysis allowed the researcher to compare the coded data against each category or concept discovered during coding and to look for similarities and differences. Corbin and Strauss (1990) maintained:

> Each concept earns its way into the theory by repeatedly being present in interviews, documents, and observations in one form or another---or by being

> significantly absent (i.e., it should be present, but isn't, so that questions must be asked). (p. 7)

Comparative analysis also assisted the researcher in "guarding against bias" and "achieving greater precision" in grouping of concepts (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 9). Lastly, during the data analysis, the researcher searched for negative cases where the data did not fit or an outlier to the emerging concepts, themes, or patterns was found. Negative cases allowed the researcher to explore further, confirm or refute the findings, and refine the theory if needed (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

In addition, any document analysis was examined in a similar fashion through coding, memoing, analytical questioning, comparative analysis, and negative cases searches. The researcher used triangulation methods to ensure trustworthiness, credibility, and consistency. "Triangulation is a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 126). In this study, both semi-structured interviews, documents, and observations were used to triangulate findings. To confirm validity, the researcher also provided opportunities for participants to verify their interview responses as a form of member checking. The feedback from participants was used to make corrections, additions, or edits as necessary.

SUMMARY

This chapter included a brief introduction to the topic and the research questions of the study. Following the introduction, an overview of the qualitative research method and

design, as well as the grounded theory framework of the study were described. Next, a description was provided of the population and the sample of participants to be included in the study using purposive sampling methods. The researcher also included the description of the data collection instruments and gave an account of the researcher's preparation, positionality, and bias towards the study. Finally, the data collection procedures were outlined as well as how the data were analyzed.

Following this chapter will be a discussion of the findings in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore the principal supervisors' role, the practices they employ, and the challenges they encounter in developing principals' instructional leadership capacity. Additionally, the study explored how the principal supervisors addressed the surfaced challenges. This chapter provides an account of the study's findings including a description of the sites and participants, the role principal supervisors play, the practices they employ, and the challenges they encounter, and the strategies used to address the challenges while developing principals' instructional leadership capacity.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITES AND PARTICIPANTS

This section includes information about each of the districts in which the participants are employed, followed by descriptions of the participants including demographics, educational backgrounds, and current work history. Due to the limited number of principal supervisors employed in Texas school districts, both the participants' and districts' identities have been masked by pseudonyms. Additionally, any identifying information (including facts, data, or background in quotations), has been omitted, disguised, or replaced by brackets to safeguard the identities.

Sites. A total of three school districts located in the state of Texas were included in this study: Bradley, Flynn, and Lawrence Independent School Districts (ISD).

Information for each district was acquired from the 2017-18 Texas Academic Performance Reports (TAPR), (TEA, 2017b).

Bradley ISD. A suburban district, Bradley ISD serves approximately 50,000 students dispersed among 34 elementary schools, 11 middle schools, 7 high schools, and 3 alternative learning centers. Overall, the district's academic achievement is rated "high" yielding several accolades in recent years. High school graduation rates are slightly above 96% and nearly 67% of the students are considered college ready. The student group distribution consists of 9% African-American, 30% Hispanic, 40% White, 17% Asian, and 4% are two or more races. Nearly 26% of the students are identified as economically disadvantaged and both English Language Learners and Students with Disabilities are estimated at two percent, respectively. The total professional staff consists of 4,000 of which 53% are teachers, 11% are professional support, 3% consist of school leadership, and less than 1% account for central office administrators. The average years of experience of principals within the district is estimated at 6 years while teachers are at 11 years (TEA, 2017b).

Flynn ISD. This urban district educates 86,000 students in 83 elementary schools, 29 middle schools, 18 high schools, and various other specialty campuses. The district's academic achievement is rated "average" and has identified areas of improvement which need to be addressed. However, the high school graduation rates have slightly increased in the last two years to 87%, yet only 37% of the students are considered college ready. The student group distribution consists of 23% African-American, 62% Hispanic, 11%

white, and both Asian and two or more races are at two percent. Approximately 80% of the students are identified as economically disadvantaged, 30% as English Language Learners, and 8% as Students with Disabilities. The district's professional staff count is 7,500 of which 53% are teachers, 13% are identified as professional support, 3% consist of school leadership, and less than 1% consist of central office staff. The average years of experience for principals in the district is 7 years while teachers are at 11 years (TEA, 2017b).

Lawrence ISD. A major suburban district, Lawrence ISD educates 60,000 students enrolled in 55 elementary schools, 10 middle schools, and 13 traditional, alternative, and college-prep high schools. The overall academic ratings for the district are "average" with need of assistance in designated academic areas. The graduation rate also increased in the last two years to 87% while 42% of the students met the college readiness standard. The student group distribution consists of 25% African-American, 46% Hispanic, 20% White, 6% Asian and nearly 3% of two or more races. Of the overall student population, approximately 65% of the students are identified as economically disadvantaged, 26% as English Language Learners, and 8% as Students with Disabilities. The district's professional staff count is 5,200 of which 50% are teachers, 11% are identified as professional support, 3% consist of school leadership, and less than 1% consist of central office staff. The average years of experience for principals in the district is reported at 7 years while teachers are at 10 years (TEA, 2017b).

Table 1 provides an overview of each district. The districts range in size and are identified as either suburban, major suburban, or urban based on the number of students enrolled, the number of schools, and the geographic location of each district. Lastly, the table also indicates the overall academic performance of each district as determined by the state accountability measures.

Table 1: District Overview

District	District type	Number of students enrolled	Number of schools	Academic Performance
Bradley ISD	Suburban	50,000	55	High
Flynn ISD	Urban	86,000	130	Average with improvement required at some schools
Lawrence ISD	Major Suburban	60,000	78	Average with improvement required at some schools

Table 2 lists each district's student demographic information. It provides the total number of students enrolled in per district alongside the percentage of students in each group. The table also displays the percentage of students identified as economically disadvantaged, English Language Learners, and Students with disabilities. In some instances, the data shows large variances in student groups among the three districts, especially for students who are economically disadvantaged.

Table 2: District Student Demographic Information

Student demographics	Bradley ISD	Flynn ISD	Lawrence ISD
Total Number of Students	50,000	86,000	60,000
African-American	9%	23%	25%
Hispanic	30%	62%	46%
White	40%	11%	20%
Asian	4%	2%	6%
Two or More Races	4%	2%	3%
Economically Disadvantaged	26%	80%	65%
English Language Learner	2%	30%	26%
Students with Disabilities	2%	8%	8%

Table 3 shows the total number of professional staff for each district. These positions include: teachers, professional support, school leadership, and central office staff. The table also indicates the average years of experience for principals and teachers. The average years of experience for both teachers and principals appears to be consistent across all districts.

Table 3: District's Professional Staff and Years of Principal and Teacher Experience Information

Staff Information	Bradley ISD	Flynn ISD	Lawrence ISD
Total Number of Professional Staff	4000	7500	5200
% Teachers	53%	53%	50%
% Professional Support	11%	13%	11%
% School Leadership	3%	3%	3%
% Central Office Staff	<1%	<1%	<1%
Principals' Average Years of Experience	6	7	7
Teachers' Average Years of Experience	11	11	10

Participant demographics and positions. All three participants have been principal supervisors for three or more years and have twenty or more years' experience in the educational field. Each participant served as a principal for one or more schools prior to taking on the position of a principal supervisor. Though several participants met the study's criteria, including both males and females, only female participants agreed to take part in the study.

Amanda. Amanda began her career over thirty years ago in the same suburban district, Bradley ISD, where she is now a principal supervisor. She spent nineteen years in various positions including classroom teacher, athletic coach, and assistant principal both

at the middle and high school level. Prior to taking on the role of principal supervisor, Amanda was a high school principal for ten years.

Eight years into the principalship, Amanda reflected on her career and found herself to be in a satisfied place, but she decided she would reevaluate her career once again at the ten-year mark. When that time came, Amanda found herself taking a close look at her career thus far and considered the possibility of applying for the principal supervisor position that had come available. Amanda stated:

> At that time, when I did that, I thought, "I want to make a difference at a larger scale." I love the campus, miss the kids, but it's just that time in my career, I thought I needed to do something for my own growth, but also giving back to the district. That was an opportunity where I was in a win-win situation. If I got the job, great. If I didn't, I was in a terrific place, I wasn't [going to] be devastated. I'd be hurt a little, but I wasn't [going to be] devastated.

After some considerations, Amanda applied for the secondary principal supervisor position and was selected to lead all the middle and high school principals in the district. She supervised eighteen school principals altogether and had a direct report, a person who supported her in the work for the next several years. Recently, her position shifted from one that focused solely on secondary schools to one that is now organized by a feeder pattern consisting of K-12 schools located within a specified region or area of the district. Amanda acquired a total of ten schools to supervise within one of the feeder patterns in the district. In addition, her direct report's position was eliminated, so she was left without the additional support to supervise and manage the ten schools.

Gina. The educational career path for Gina began over twenty years ago in the classroom. She was a teacher and an athletic coach for nearly twelve years before moving

to an administrative position as an assistant principal for three years. Shortly thereafter she pursued a principalship and had experience as both a middle and high school principal for seven years.

After being a campus principal for several years, she realized she was ready to move on to the principal supervisor position. She shared her thinking in more detail:

> Being an experienced principal at multiple levels, [both] middle and high school, I really believed that most strong leaders, after about a certain number of years, leading a building and [have been] implementing change, that [they] need a new challenge.

Gina found an opportunity and was hired for the principal supervisor position in a previous district where she oversaw a group of K-12 campuses within a single feeder pattern. She reflected about that experience saying, "That [the principal supervisor position] was an opportunity for me to grow my own personal leadership when I joined [previous school district]." After two years she again applied and was hired for a similar principal supervisor position in her current district supervising over 40 principals in a learning network of K-12 campuses. During this time, she also chose to acquire a doctoral degree in Educational Administration and Leadership. Three years later, the superintendent reorganized the department into two separate units, one for elementary schools and another for secondary schools. As a result, Gina now oversees all the secondary schools in the district, and she directly supervises the principals of schools rated as "Improvement Required" by the TEA. Additionally, she leads a team of principal supervisors who work supervising and supporting principals. Lastly, Gina also is a member of the superintendent's leadership cabinet.

Emily. Emily has also been in the educational field for over twenty years. She began her career as a middle school classroom teacher and then transitioned into several positions including an elementary assistant principal, middle school Dean of Instruction, and finally an elementary assistant principal. During this time, Emily stepped out of the public-school system and chose to take on a leadership development position for a university where she created a curriculum for a master's program in school leadership.

The transition to the principal supervisor position for Emily began in a previous district; however, she did not personally pursue the role but rather was approached by another colleague to apply. Emily remembered:

> I actually had a former supervisor reach out to me and he was promoted to an assistant superintendent and he reached out and said, "Hey, I have this great opportunity. I think you'd be great at supervising principals K-12, and I want you to apply." And we were in the middle of having new leadership, a new superintendent in our district. And I decided this may be a great opportunity for me to step outside of the principalship and to supervise principals and so I went through an interview process and I was selected actually on the spot, so it must've been a very good interview.

Emily spent the next two years serving as the principal supervisor and oversaw a feeder pattern of schools. She then decided to move to another district and was hired in Lawrence ISD as the principal supervisor where she supervised a larger number of schools. After three years, the superintendent reorganized the position so that she now directly supports and supervises principals of seven K-12 campuses that are or could be rated "Improvement Required" by the TEA. Additionally, Emily leads and supervises a team of principal supervisors who also directly supervise the remaining principals in the district.

Recently, she made the decision to pursue a doctoral degree in Education Policy and Leadership.

Table 4 includes further detail for each participant's information including years in current district, current assignment, educational background, work experience, and previously held roles. Overall, each participant has been a principal supervisor for three or more years in her current district and has over twenty years' experience in the field of education. Each participant has also previously held the position of a principal.

Table 4: Participant Information

Participant	Amanda	Gina	Emily
Years in Current District	6 years	6 years	3 years
Work Assignment	Supervises 10 principals in one feeder-pattern of K-12 schools	Supervises 10 principals and a team of principal supervisors. Oversees 52 secondary principals	Supervises 7 principals and a team of principal supervisors. Oversees 78 elementary and secondary principals.
Educational Background	Master's in Educational Administration	Doctorate in Educational Leadership and Administration	Pursuing Doctorate in Educational Leadership
Work Experience	Over 30 years in the education field	Over 20 years in the education field	Over 20 years in the education field
Previous Roles	Teacher, Assistant Principal, Athletic Coach, Principal	Teacher, Assistant Principal, Athletic Coach, Principal	Teacher, Assistant Principal, Dean of Instruction, Principal

Additionally, the three principal supervisors have unique reporting and supervisory structures in their districts as illustrated in Figure 1. For instance, Amanda is supervised and evaluated by a direct report to the superintendent and in turn evaluates principals assigned to her. On the other hand, Gina, who is supervised and evaluated directly by her superintendent, evaluates a few principals and other principal supervisors. Emily reports directly to her superintendent; however, she is evaluated by a direct report to the superintendent. She also supervises and evaluates a select number of principals in addition to all the principal supervisors in the district. Furthermore, as depicted in Figure 1, both Gina and Emily are the lead principal supervisors overseeing a team of principal supervisors in the district and are responsible for directing their work and providing them with coaching and professional development to enhance their skills as instructional leaders of principals.

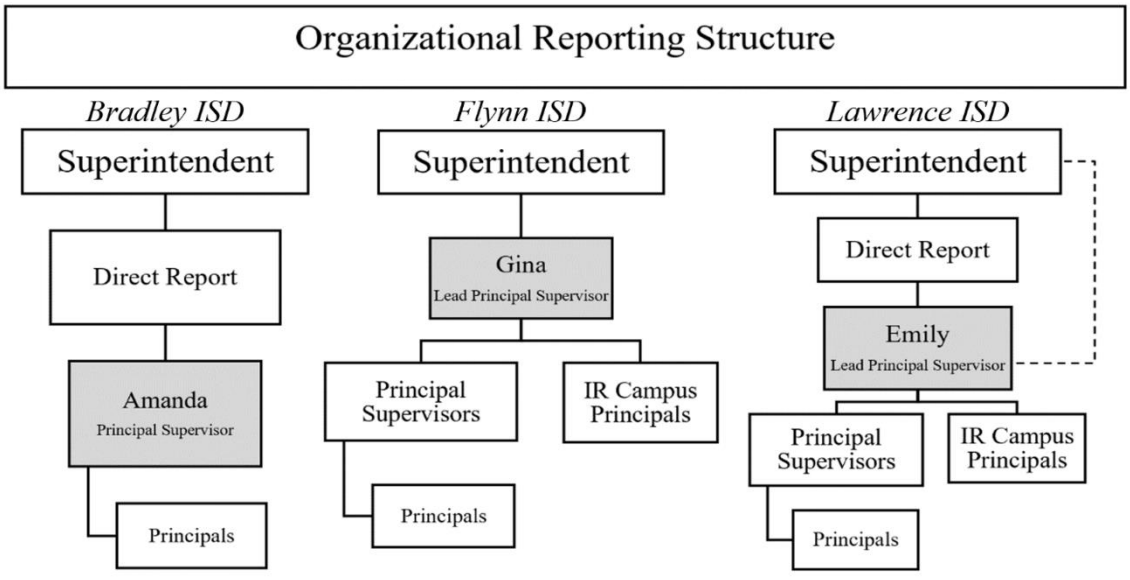

Figure 1. Organizational reporting structure of each principal supervisors.

Before proceeding with the major findings, it is important to note a difference in how extant literature refers to the terms *role* and *practices* as opposed to how they are defined in this study. In some studies, the term role and practices are used interchangeably to describe or define the position, responsibilities, and/or actions of a principal supervisor whereas in others there is an apparent distinction. For the purpose of this study, a clear delineation has been made between the term role and practices. Roles entail the responsibilities of a principal supervisor while practices relate to the purposeful actions principal supervisors take to develop principals' instructional leadership capacity, although in some research referenced roles may be identified as practices.

QUESTION 1: WHAT ROLE DO PRINCIPAL SUPERVISORS PLAY IN DEVELOPING PRINCIPALS' INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP CAPACITY?

According to the data, the role of the principal supervisor may vary from district to district in both expectations and practice. However, data reflect that principal supervisors enact two roles. These included: instructional leader and administrative manager.

Instructional leader. Based on the participants' responses, one role the principal supervisor plays is that of an instructional leader. As such, the principal supervisor focuses on instructional matters that aim to improve student learning outcomes and strengthen principals' instructional leadership capacity. It may encompass guiding the principals in the development of instructional goals, ensuring strong instructional programing at the schools, utilizing protocols to study student data, and determining with the principals the

necessary resources required to improve teaching and learning. To enact their role as an instructional leader, the principal supervisors carry out specific responsibilities. These responsibilities include: alignment of district and school goals, implementation and support of instructional programs, analysis of data, and allocation of resources.

Alignment of district and school goals. According to the data, alignment of goals emerged as an essential responsibility for the principal supervisors to perform as instructional leaders. Alignment means that both the district and campuses are working towards common goals and initiatives to support instructional improvement. Providing clarity and guidance to the principals about district expectations and direction on how to set goals appears to be critical to the alignment process. In some cases, the use of a tool and guided questions provides the support principals need to align their school goals. For instance, Amanda utilizes school improvement plans as the drivers of goal development and to ensure alignment to the district goals. When supporting principals in this process, Amanda considers questions like: "What initiatives are in the district? and How are we doing that?" Additionally, she also considers the following:

> What is [the superintendent's] and [my supervisor's] vision of what they want this next year? What are some big-ticket items that are [going to] happen that we need to be able to talk to our principals [about] and make sure they understand?

Furthermore, Amanda utilizes the plans to converse with principals on the status of the instructional goals on an ongoing basis. Through this process she uncovers resources or areas of support that principals may need to reach the desired outcomes.

Emily also underscored the importance of district and campus goal alignment. She stated, "I try to make sure that the [student] learning is connected to [the] overarching goals [of the district and the schools]." She also emphasized that the alignment process is critical to developing principals' instructional leadership capacity. As she stated, "[by] align[ing] the overarching goals . . . [I can show] how they can apply [the goals] to their role as a principal on their campus."

Alignment also appears to go beyond the district and campuses. Ensuring that the goals of interdependent departments at the district level are reflective of those set by key stakeholders, including the district's superintendent and board of trustees, is also an action the participants take as instructional leaders. In Gina's words:

> The Board, of course, communicates and works with the Superintendent in defining what are the goals for the district. Of course, those goals are aligned to Superintendent's goals, which are all outlined in our strategic plan to accomplish those goals. Each one of us then makes sure that our departmental goals mirror those of the Board and the Superintendent and our actions. It's really an aligned process that goes through all departments that meet the goals.

Implementation and support of instructional programs. Another instructional leader role responsibility which emerged from the data relates to ensuring effective instructional programs are in place to improve student learning in schools through a supportive implementation process. This responsibility aims to guarantee high-levels of teaching and learning in core content classes and college-level courses in order to increase post-secondary student success. It also appears that implementation and support may involve the use of an explicit learning framework with examples of strategies to increase

student engagement in the classroom. Support may range from providing funding for instructional programs to side-by-side work with the principals throughout the implementation process.

Both implementation and support as described by the participants varied in scope and action depending on the schools they supervised, and the programs being implemented. For instance, Amanda supervises several schools, many with unique instructional programming including the International Baccalaureate Programme, Advanced Placement, Dual Language, and Dual Credit. She stated that she primarily supports the principals "by providing funding" for the required professional development attached to each program and monitors the implementation throughout the year.

On the other hand, Emily is in the process of implementing a newly adopted learning framework designed to provide instructional strategies for principals and teachers to increase student engagement in the classroom. She explained why the framework was needed: "We basically determined that [student] engagement was a huge gap in our district." Emily noted the benefits of this new framework: "Basically, it's akin to project-based learning . . . [where] it's really more student-centered. [The students] develop their own products [and] the teacher is the facilitator." She works collaboratively with the principals in the implementation of the framework and hopes to see it in practice in all schools across the district.

For Gina, one of her goals is to support campuses to improve student achievement in math in the middle grades and to increase the number of students who meet the "career

and college readiness" component of state accountability at the high school level. Four of the high schools she oversees were rated as "Improvement Required." Of the four schools, three of those schools earned the rating due to a low number of students qualifying as "career and college ready." As a result, Gina stated, "Now, we are putting systems in place to address that [low performance] this year." To do so, she will support the effective implementation of instructional programs such as "Dual Credit" courses where students can earn college credit while in high school, thus increasing the number of students who are "college and career ready" by the state's accountability expectations.

Analysis of data. According to the participants, analysis of student data emerged as another critical responsibility of principal supervisors. Analysis refers to the interpretation of student academic data and identification of achievement trends and gaps in student learning. The analysis of data as shared by participants is a collaborative process with the principals and at times with teachers where campus academic data is thoroughly studied, and feedback is provided to develop action-oriented, response plans. For instance, Emily takes time with the principals to establish a protocol on how to analyze the data. She explained that "helping the principal understand how to use data" and "how to analyze it to inform next steps" is imperative "to ensur[ing] data driven practices sustain [student] achievement over time." She employs the use of a data protocol to guide the principals through the data analysis process. She noted, "[The principals are] pulling a piece of data from their campus . . . and going through a consultancy protocol where they're actually answering questions about the data, analyzing it, and then determining next steps."

Amanda's data-based discussions with principals revolve around the trends found in the student data and then she collaborates with them on a response plan. Specifically, she asks the principals "What is your data telling us?" and "What are we [going to] do next year to make sure it [does not] happen again?" She also pays closer attention to schools or grade-levels struggling to improve student academic data. She explained, "I've got schools that have done very well, but I have schools that have one grade level . . . [that] continues to be a struggle." As a result, Amanda's approach to analyzing data goes beyond just involving principals. She also invites teachers from all grade-levels and common subject-areas to examine their student data, identify common academic trends, and collaborate on ways to improve instruction. She stated, "[I want] for [teachers] to get together and talk about what is their data showing. What [are] we get[ting] every year? What do we do? What do we expect?" Amanda also expressed the need to have principals present during this process with the teachers, "When we do these meetings, I want principals to be involved in the dialogue."

Gina's approach to data analysis also involves her team of principal supervisors in addition to the principals. She explained that together as a team, "We sit down and one of the things we're doing is we're looking at student data." Specifically, they identify the "lagging data" keeping them from "closing [the] achievement gap" among the student groups. The "lagging data" refers to indicators which may include local and state assessment scores, level of college-readiness, and graduation rates which show a lack of improvement over time especially among specific student groups. Additionally, Gina

explained that data is also analyzed when "tiering our schools" and in determining the level of "autonomy" given to the principals based on their school's academic performance. A higher level of autonomy is awarded to those principals whose schools are showing evidence of significant improvement as opposed to those whose student achievement data has regressed.

Allocation of resources. Ensuring that the principals have the necessary resources to support teaching and learning in their schools emerged as another significant responsibility of principal supervisors as instructional leaders. Resources may include instructional materials, external consultants, trainings, professional learning opportunities, and technology. Resources may also be located in certain central office level departments including curriculum and instruction, human resources, special programs, or finance. Principal supervisors ensure that these resources are available to the principals. Emily describes some instances of allocating resources:

> With the lowest performing schools . . . we need to increase academic achievement . . . [the] priority is the academic work. Making sure . . . the principal has what he . . . or she needs for resources for teachers, . . . [and] that we have instructional supports outside of the school in terms of specialists in [curriculum and instruction].

Participants also relied on the information collected from the campus data, coaching conversations with principals, and campus walk-throughs to determine the resources needed for the principals and their respective campuses. For example, Amanda shared how she identifies the need and provides access to resources:

> [While on campuses I] learn from them [principals and teachers] about what's important on the school [campus], what their priorities are, [and] maybe what are some concerns they're having. It can be, "Okay, this new [curriculum] structure,

> we're not really for sure. Maybe we can get somebody out of [the] curriculum [department] to come over here and have them walk you through what is this about, what are the priorities, [and share] some of the resources.

Gina mentioned allocating additional instructional and technology resources to some of the schools most in need. She also leverages external conferences and consultants as resources to develop principals' instructional leadership capacity. Some specific ones she mentioned included: "AIE or the Advancing Improvement in Education, Region XI trainings on Principal Managers quick reference guide, George Bush Institute on building principal talent and an evaluation system, [and] System of Great Schools [of] building a school performance framework."

Administrative manager. According to participant responses, not only did the role of instructional leader emerge for principal supervisors but also one of an administrative manager. In this role, the principal supervisors focus on supporting principals through the managerial and operational aspects of schools. It may entail guiding the principals through a campus safety crisis, building maintenance issues, parent, student, and employee issues, and budget management. Specifically, for principal supervisors this role also includes the hiring of the campus principal. Enacting this role requires the principal supervisors to carry out specific responsibilities. These responsibilities include: managing daily operations, addressing student and personnel matters, and hiring staff.

Managing daily operations. According to the data, tending to the day-to-day operational aspects of the schools emerged as a major responsibility for principal supervisors as administrative managers. Responsibilities related to operations appeared to

consist of responding to non-instructional matters such as a campus crisis, building maintenance, and managing budgets. For example, Emily stated: "[I]f anything [goes] wrong in [a] school, [I am] pull[ed] into it" such as "the AC [is] off in the building, [or] the police being called." A few of the schools Amanda supervises are undergoing construction requiring her attention to details concerning each school specifically. She stated, "Each campus is a little bit different, . . . [and] if it has construction, [I have to know] what's going on with it."

Participants are also responsible for overseeing campus budgets and managing their own department budget in a fiscally responsive manner. Emily stated: "[I] also assist with . . . budget for [the] campuses from year to year." Gina shared that she "[has] to manage [the] budget" and constantly consider "budget cuts" when allocating funds and resources to campuses. Amanda also "get[s] involved with budget" especially when there are "big bills" she needs to pay. Most of the funding goes directly to the principals to purchase instructional materials, to contract services from external vendors, or to hire additional personnel.

Addressing student and personnel matters. Administrative managers addressing student and personnel matters emerged as another role responsibility. This responsibility may entail principal supervisors overseeing matters relating to student discipline and parent and employee concerns. According to the participants, these matters are referred to them when a resolution has not been reached by the campus principal and has escalated to the district level. For instance, Emily stated: "[B]ecause I am the supervisor . . . [I am] pulled

into [the] parent complaint[s]." She described the process of addressing parent concerns: "[I] typically speak with them to try to resolve the concerns. [I] follow up with [the] campus principals to ensure the issues have been resolved."

Similarly, Amanda also gets involved when parents or teachers pursue grievances against campus personnel. She explained, "[I] have upset parents . . . [and] teachers . . . [who] want to talk to somebody . . . to help them solve [the problem]." To manage these situations, Amanda meets with the individuals and seeks clarity on the issue. She stated:

> I like to get the person face to face, sit down, and just listen. Making sure I understand [why they are] mad about this [and] . . . what solutions are [they] seeking? Most of the time, people will say, "Well, I want this and this and this, and this is not fair." "Okay, then let me work on it [and] let me get back to you."

Attempts are also made to redirect the issue back to the campus principal to resolve. Amanda stated, "A lot of times it's trying to walk them [parents and teachers] through [the process] and get them back to the campus because they want to skip over [the principal]." However, in some cases that is not the ideal course of action; therefore, principal supervisors may have to conduct grievance hearings with all parties involved to address the issue. On average, Emily stated she handles "four to five" grievances per year.

Hiring staff. According to participant responses, another critical responsibility of the principal supervisors as administrative managers relates to hiring staff in particular the selection of a campus principal. Hiring of staff primarily includes ensuring the most qualified personnel are hired for vacant positions. Gina stressed that the hiring of the campus principal is "probably the most important decision I make . . . because I believe that is the most critical role." Similarly, for Emily "assessing do I have the right person,

[in] the right seat" is most vital especially when hiring a school principal. Amanda also highlighted the importance of hiring the right principal in further detail:

> Principals are the ones that are making the ultimate decisions on the campuses, and so they're [going to] drive instruction, they're [going to] drive what's [going to] happen into the classroom. They're [going to] set those expectations. To me, making sure the leadership is right for that campus and that it has a vision and it has a mission.

She also shared the repercussions of not having the right principal in the position: "If you don't have the right person, then you have to supervise and . . . maybe give directives and eventually you may have to make that hard call where this person is not right for this school."

Based on the participants' responses and a review of their job descriptions, principal supervisors appear to play two major roles in developing the principals' instructional leadership capacity. The emerging roles included: instructional leader and administrative manager. Data also indicate that as instructional leaders, participants' responsibilities pertain specifically to instructional matters such as guiding and aligning district and campus goals, supporting principals in the implementation of instructional programs, analyzing student data, and allocating resources. As the data revealed, each participant responds according to the unique instructional needs of their campuses, students, and principals. Based on the data, the role of administrative manager also appears to be important for principal supervisors. Responsibilities in this role are primarily focused on the day-to-day managerial and operational aspects of the job as well as addressing student,

parent, and personnel matters. In addition, a major task cited by the participants in this role included the selection and hiring of the campus principal.

While it appears that principal supervisors fulfill the role of an instructional leader and administrative manager, the following section explores the intentional practices they employ to develop and strengthen principals' instructional leadership capacity.

QUESTION 2: WHAT PRACTICES DO PRINCIPAL SUPERVISORS EMPLOY TO DEVELOP PRINCIPALS' INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP CAPACITY?

According to the data, principal supervisors employ three practices to enact the emergent roles. Practices refer to specific intentional actions that contribute to the development of principals' instructional leadership capacity. These included: building relationships, providing and facilitating professional learning, and coaching for instructional leadership.

Building relationships. Creating relationships with the principals emerged as a critical practice the principal supervisors employ. This practice refers to structures and processes that aim to connect and relate principal supervisor and principals to each other as well as promoting the development of interrelations amongst principals and teachers. The action appears to involve developing trust, empathic listening to the principals to understand their viewpoints, promoting celebrations, and communicating clearly with principals. By doing so, participants aim to clearly establish the vision and expectations of the work for principals. For example, according to Amanda, focusing on relationships

is an important practice to developing principals' instructional leadership capacity. As she stated, "It's building relationships with people because if you can't, you can have a vision and you can try to give [an] expectation, but if there's nobody buying in, it's not [going to] work." Emily also reinforced the importance of professional relationships. She stated, "I really focus on relationship building [with principals]."

Amanda also highlighted the importance of building relationships for principals when they are working with their campus staff and community stakeholders. She stated, "You got to get people number one. [Y]ou're business [partners] . . . parents . . . kids, [and] teachers. If you don't have a good relationship with all . . . of those as a campus principal [then] you struggle." Additionally, she explained that she encourages principals to "celebrate [their] teachers," and communicate "expectations across the board . . . for every single teacher" to solidify relationships and establish trust. In her words she envisions the principals communicating to teachers: "These are the expectations and . . . student success will go up if we do it right. If we don't do it right, we're going to get the same results."

Emily also guides her principals to strengthen relationships with the teachers and campus staff. In her words, "how can they leverage the trust and relationships with the people on their staff and . . . build [relationships] to be able to move their work forward and capture the goals they want." She emphasized that "leveraging relationships" leads to "hav[ing] that solid high performing [school] culture."

A relevant aspect of relationship-building that participants valued as a practice both for themselves and their principals appears to be listening. Listening allows the

participants to better understand the perspectives of the principals and avoids drawing premature conclusions on their work as instructional leaders. Listening seems to be especially important particularly when principal supervisors work with new principals. As Emily stated, "some of the early things that I'm doing" is "really a lot of . . . listening."

It also appears from the data that building professional relationships may be achieved through various means. These actions may include: formal and informal interactions, campus visits, meetings, individual and collective sessions with principals to guide their relationship-building efforts. For instance, Amanda makes time to get to know her principals formally and informally. She stated, "any time we [the principal and I] can get . . . one-on-one [time is] probably [the] most important. I just love walking and talk[ing] [at schools with principals] because I think you can get more dialogue." Oftentimes she will meet a principal and say, "Hey, give me 30 minutes, let's do a quick lunch. What's going [on] in your life?"

Providing and facilitating professional learning. Another practice which surfaced from the data refers to making professional learning opportunities accessible to principals. Professional learning may be defined as gaining or enhancing technical understanding, knowledge, and skills associated with principals' instructional capacity. Delivering professional learning appears to be facilitated through various structures and formats. For instance, monthly meetings, book studies, article readings, campus learning walks, sessions with external consultants, and other resources are the most common strategies to develop principals' professional learning. These opportunities tend to be

scheduled throughout the school year and appear to be individual or collective. Further, each participant facilitates professional learning opportunities following specific agendas which might focus on operational, managerial, and instructional matters.

During an observation of a principal meeting facilitated by Emily, the agenda included administrative (operational/managerial) topics in addition to topics centered on developing the principals' instructional leadership capacity (observation, October 10, 2018). Only a brief period was spent on administrative topics which Emily referred to as "nuts and bolts." According to Emily, these professional learning meetings include clear outcomes for the principals to deepen their understanding of instructional leadership such as learning how to initiate change, tiering teacher support, or developing effective campus improvement plans (meeting agenda, October 10, 2018). Throughout the meeting, Emily was observed employing collaborative strategies such as partner work and breakout sessions, utilizing articles and case studies, and conducting question-and-answer sessions to facilitate instructional leadership learning.

Amanda leads two principal meetings on a monthly basis: one with only the principals she directly supervises and another with all the district's elementary and secondary principals. The latter meetings are collaboratively facilitated by all the principal supervisors in the district, and as Amanda explained, are opportunities where principals are "learning from their peers." On the other hand, the former meetings, as Amanda shared, are "opportunities for [her and the principals she directly supervises] to build [on] what we want to build within our [collective group]."

A review of Amanda's meeting agendas illustrated topics consisting of both administrative information and instructional leadership learning (meeting agendas, November 13, 2018; December 11, 2018). Most of the administrative items focused on compliance-oriented tasks, personnel matters, deadlines, and district requests. The agendas and observations also revealed time dedicated to focus on developing principals' instructional leadership capacity. For example, during two meetings, some principals shared newly acquired learnings from recent professional development they attended, and all shared their insights from a book study (observations, November 13, 2018; December 11, 2018). Amanda believes that by "them talking to each other builds that leadership capacity."

Gina conducts principal meetings once a month and a review of meeting agendas showed how these are structured. Each meeting begins with any messages from the district-level departments which may include administrative and leadership topics. This segment pertaining to district announcements is brief while subsequent topics heavily focus on developing principals' instructional leadership capacity. During each meeting nearly three or more hours are spent on embedded professional learning sessions primarily focused on leadership development. According to the meeting agendas and through an analysis of a year-long overview plan, the topics focus on "Effective Instructional and Cultural Leadership Practices: Data, Instruction, Intervention, Planning, and Student and Staff Culture" (planning document, August 2018).

During an observation of a principal meeting, district messages were first conveyed to a large group of principals followed by a brief message from Gina (observation, August 3, 2018). The principals were then instructed to move through four session rotations, each focused on developing their instructional leadership capacity. The session topics included: student data analysis, a leadership book study, strategies on how to conduct purposeful campus learning walks, and an overview of a school performance framework.

Coaching for instructional leadership. According to the data, coaching emerged as another critical practice employed by principal supervisors to enhance the instructional leadership capacity of principals. Coaching relates to providing specific training, direct instructions, follow-up feedback, and support of instructional leadership based on factual evidence of performance and tailored to principals' needs. According to the participants, coaching may require observing principals and providing constructive feedback inclusive of strategies to enhance their practice as instructional leaders. The most common coaching process appears to involve structured sessions devoted to classroom observations or learning walks, questioning strategies, shadow coaching, and discussions based on article readings, case studies, and scenarios. It also appears that efforts are made to differentiate coaching support for principals accordingly. In addition, the data suggests that each principal supervisor enacts coaching in different ways and at different times.

Prior to coaching principals, Emily first tiers them based on the level of support they need: "basic support, essential support, and targeted support." If a principal is identified as needing "targeted support," she spends more time engaging in coaching

"cycles" and providing feedback as opposed to one identified as needing "basic support." When coaching principals identified as needing "targeted support," Emily focuses on the practice of giving feedback to principals and how principals can effectively give feedback to their teachers. She shared an example of how she does this:

> I observe principals giving feedback to teachers. Not everyone but the ones who I feel like are struggling the most. And so really being able to see and hear what they're focusing on in the observation and the feedback conversation. They're also teachers . . . that I observe with them and then I watch[ed] them get feedback so at least I can see that they hit the right thing.

She added, "being able to see and hear what [the principals are] focusing on in the observation and feedback conversation" is important in developing their instructional leadership capacity.

Emily also employs scenarios to coach principals in "identify[ing] the right [leadership] moves to make." This type of team coaching takes place mostly during the principal meetings through article readings and case studies. She participates in learning walks to observe classrooms with the principals and explained that this practice allows her to "have some . . . kind of peering into the instructional lens of the principal" to provide that in the "moment" coaching. She elaborated further by saying, "I want to see and hear as I'm walking classrooms [the] principals' lens being sharpened" and "that they're focusing on the right levers to move instruction and I hope that my support . . . helps them develop that."

For Amanda, coaching is one of the most important practices in developing principals' instructional leadership capacity. She stated, "I want some of my work to

always be poking somebody to be better than that they are and coaching them to get there." Like Emily, Amanda often conducts campus learning walks to "walk and talk" with the principals. She often says to the principals, "Let's go walk [classrooms]" and tell me "what do you see?" This practice also allows her to not only coach her principals but also to discover needs that may require her attention.

Gina also views the practice of coaching as a critical component to developing principals' leadership capacity. She most often employs learning walks to coach principals and offer feedback on their practice. She believes in "not tell[ing] [the principals] what to do" but rather coaching principals using "questioning strategies" and "providing feedback." She expressed her goal of developing principals into instructional leaders by saying, "My focus [is] to build [principals] into what we all identified as a key leader. That goes back to the visionary and strategic planner. That goes back into being the instructional leader and continuing to learn."

It also appears from the data that given the specific structure of a school district some principal supervisors work with a team of supervisors who directly support, supervise and evaluate principals as it is the case in Flynn and Lawrence ISDs. Within such structures, there is a lead principal supervisor who must provide support and coaching to those on their teams. As lead supervisors coach the principal supervisors, they appear to focus on observing and providing feedback to the team of principal supervisors during their interactions with principals. Gina explained her approach to coaching and stated that she

meets with the principal supervisors at a school and together they "calibrate as a team" on how to give feedback to principals. She added:

> We will walk through our processes and we'll listen to the [principal supervisor] give feedback to that principal. Then we'll debrief and give feedback to the [principal supervisor]. Then I will have a one-on-one [meetings] and give coaching and next steps [to the principal supervisor]. Then I will schedule myself to meet with that [principal supervisor] again.

Emily also coaches principal supervisors, but she referred to her style of coaching as "shadow coaching." In her words "Shadow coaching is where I spen[d] a half a day with them [the principal supervisors] . . . and during that [time] I ask them to . . . identif[y] a specific coaching goal that they have." Based on the individual goals, Emily provides ongoing assistance to the principal supervisors as they walk the school with the campus principal. As she stated,

> I watched her [the principal supervisor's] interaction with the principal and I just kind of take notes around the coaching goal and then areas that she wants to strengthen. And so that at the end we debrief [on how] I think it went. I ask[ed] a couple of guiding questions around that coaching goal that she had and then cite specific evidence that I saw where it was being actualized or maybe where there was a gap that she might be able to shore up.

According to participants' comments and documented observations, principal supervisors employ three main practices to develop the leadership capacity of their principals. These practices include: building relationships, providing and facilitating professional learning, and coaching for instructional leadership. While all principal supervisors appear to have a strong focus on the professional development of principals and employ strategies that have promise to contribute to enhancing principals' instructional leadership practice, the data suggest that they also face specific, contextual problems as

they perform the emergent roles. The next section presents the challenges principal supervisors encounter in developing principals' instructional leadership capacity and how they address them.

QUESTION 3: WHAT CHALLENGES DO PRINCIPAL SUPERVISORS ENCOUNTER IN DEVELOPING PRINCIPALS' INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP CAPACITY AND HOW DO THEY ADDRESS THEM?

Given the dual focus of this question, the results are presented in two sections. The first section focuses on the challenges the principal supervisors encounter and the second section on the strategies they use to address the emergent challenges.

Challenges encountered. According to the data, principal supervisors encounter several barriers as they perform the roles of instructional leaders and administrative managers. Challenges refer to the obstacles the participants face in enacting their roles and in attempting to employ best practices to develop principals' instructional leadership capacity. These difficulties appear to emerge during the principal supervisors' initial transition to the position or are ones they face on an ongoing basis. The surfaced challenges included: central office politics and decision-making, multiple administrative role expectations, minimal instructional leader role support, and lack of familiarity of curriculum and instruction across grade-levels.

Central office politics and decision-making. A challenge which emerged from the data relates to the political and micro-political behaviors of stakeholders within the

organization and how they impact the process of decision-making. More specifically, this challenge refers to the bureaucratic policies of how and when decisions are made and who makes them, the self-interests of those involved in the decision-making, and the dogmatic culture of the organization. According to participants, this challenge is ongoing and one they have encountered since they took on the principal supervisor position. For instance, Amanda recounted her first experience with central office politics. She shared: "When you get into [central office] admin[istration], it's a whole different world because you add a layer of politics to it. Now you're working with different schools, . . . principals, . . . communities, [and] . . . stakeholders."

In addition, participants also encountered a new level of politics at central office very different from their previously held positions. Each participant was a campus principal prior to becoming a principal supervisor. They commented on the differences in making decisions as a campus principal versus a principal supervisor working at the central office level where decision-making in the former position was simpler and within their locus of control. For example, Gina shared a conversation she had with her mentor on the differences:

> One of the things in speaking to a mentor of mine [about] central office they said to me, "When you're sitting behind the desk of a principal, you make all the decisions, you make things happen. When you're sitting at central office, you have to work collaboratively. You can't move until at least three or four other people or departments move."

Similarly, Amanda also reflected on the differences in decision-making between a principal and principal supervisor:

> The thing that happens [at central office is that decision-making is] not as fast as you want it [because] there's different layers that you have to go through. It's a big difference. Whereas a campus principal . . . you problem solve. You get the right people in the room [and] ultimately you make that decision.

According to the participants, politics and decision-making at central office adds another layer of complexity to their work as principal supervisors, especially when advocating for the needs of the campuses and principals. Participants report that navigating the bureaucratic culture of decision-making within central office is particularly difficult. Gina shared, "That's the largest challenge, is getting things done when you need them done [and] navigating all of those things to get moving in a direction to get everything so schools can get what they need and work efficiently." Amanda explained that she encounters "layers of bureaucracy" when trying to gain access to those "who make the decisions" [at central office] to support campus principals. She stated, "[N]o one was going to talk to me unless I talked to two people above them."

Gina further elaborated on the challenge of decision-making at the central office level related to the self-interests of those involved. She explained, "Sometimes people can get caught up in their own minutia and they don't understand that collectively we have to move together to make the greatest impact." As a result, this view has influenced the central office culture. Gina expanded further, "There is a tradition of non-confrontation here. It's led to low capacity and low expectations. When you try to hold people accountable, there's a lot of pushback [and] a little bit of politics."

It also appears from the data that central office politics and the delays in decision-making leads to skepticism and distrust from the campus principals. When dysfunction

exists at the decision-making level, it tends to leave a negative impression on the principals, especially when the reason for the decision is not clearly articulated. As Amanda explained,

> If the principals don't know the why [of a decision], then they're [going to] come to [the principal supervisors]. If we don't know the why, then they look at us going, "Are [you all at central office] connected or not?

She added: "Sooner or later we pay the price for the lost time it [took] to make a decision become a reality."

Multiple administrative role expectations. Attending to numerous administrative tasks which might take time away from efforts and expectations to develop principals' instructional leadership capacity emerged as another challenge. The emerging multiple administrative expectations may include participating in district-level meetings, working with the school board and the superintendent, supporting district initiatives, addressing student and parent concerns, or responding to crises on campuses. According to the participants, much of their time is consumed by these administrative obligations expected by others and they struggle to find time to provide principals with the instructional leadership coaching and support they need. For instance, Amanda explained that administrative expectations such as participating in "grievances," "hearings," and "district meetings and district initiatives" keep her from "coaching and building [the] leadership" of principals. She stated, "[The challenge is] keeping true to what my job is. That's to be on campus, coaching, walking classrooms, looking at the data, celebrating kids, celebrating teachers, celebrating principals, and [assistant principals] and counselors and everything."

She added, “My goal . . . is to be on campuses 65% of the time [but] I’ve learned that I cannot make that.”

Other administrative responsibilities include serving on the superintendent’s leadership cabinet and working closely with the district’s board of trustees. For example, Gina explained how working with the board of trustees consumes most of her time leaving her with little time left to support principals:

> Probably about 70% of my work, is board [of trustees] work. Working with the board on behalf of the superintendent. A lot of times, they have concerns with community stakeholders, and they call me directly to ask that those things are addressed.

On the other hand, Emily finds herself tackling many administrative obligations both at the campus and district level. She stated, “I have so much outside of just supervising principals where I'm working with other [principal] supervisors in the department and other initiatives.” Emily is also a member of the superintendent’s cabinet and though she appreciates the opportunity, it also poses a challenge. She elaborated further:

> So being a cabinet member is great [in] that we have access to the superintendent and we're right there at the table. It's also a challenge because it pulls [me] out for different responsibilities connected to being a cabinet member.

These additional multiple administrative obligations affect Emily’s time to support principals. She added, “[It’s] a challenge in terms of [my] time that [I am] not able to just focus strictly on the instructional supports.” She explained, “Being able to spend dedicated time with principals around a problem or practice . . . coaching principals . . . should be an

ongoing process." However, on average, Emily shared that she spends "maybe eight to 10 hours a week" with principals and "that's [on] a good week" [whereas] "some weeks I don't go at all."

Minimal instructional leader role support. Another challenge which emerged from the data relates to the lack of guidance and assistance to fulfill the responsibilities and meet the expectations specifically of the role of instructional leader that principal supervisors play. Minimal role support may include vague information and direction on the vision, goals, and priorities of the instructional leader role in addition to a lack of clearly defined success criteria. For instance, Emily stated, "I don't feel like we've had a lot of role specific support for [principal] supervisors." She explained in further detail:

> [The leadership supervisors] expect you to coach principals, supervise principals, but nothing specific like this is how much time we expect you to spend. These are some key things we want you to work on. This is the evidence of how, you know, you're being successful. We've not had any of that kind of structure. So, I would say personally [the expectations have] not been explicitly communicated. All of us have supervised principals before. So, you're brought in [to the role] . . . and we just kind of do what we know to do honestly.

On the other hand, Gina lacked the clear vision and goals for the role of an instructional leader for principal supervisors. She explained that mostly "operational things" are being done by principal supervisors as opposed to "coaching and providing that [instructional] leadership . . . and building that capacity [of principals]." As a result, the role of an instructional leader for principal supervisors is currently functioning more as a "high-level principal" than that of "the supervisor and the coach."

It is also evident from the data that minimal role support is a challenge the participants experienced initially as they transitioned to the position. Amanda recalled her shift to the position as one with little instructions and guidance. She stated, "I think back to when I first got over here [at central office]. There is nothing when you come over here [to tell you how to be a principal supervisor]. There is no handbook." She elaborated further: "There was no sitting down and saying, "Here is what your priorities are." I didn't know what our big-ticket items were. What was the school board looking for? What was the superintendent looking for campuses in [the] district?"

For Emily minimal role support led her to question her ability to perform effectively as a principal supervisor. Though she had been in leadership positions prior, the role of an instructional leader as a principal supervisor required a new level of technical and leadership skills. Technical skills relate to the ability to perform one's own work while leadership skills refer to the capacity needed to lead and support others in their work. She stated:

> I really felt like there were gaps. We [principal supervisors] were just told we were hired and paid to coach principals. I know how to coach teachers, but I'm not even sure if I was really coaching. I think I did an okay job. Learning how to be a leader of leaders in that way . . . was a learning curve.

Emily further elaborated on the minimal role preparation and heavy reliance on the principal role experience. She stated, "I don't know if there's a lot of preparation for supervisors, kind of like you were a great principal. Great. Now you can supervise them [principals] and [that] didn't always translate."

Lack of familiarity of curriculum and instruction across grade-levels. According to the data, a thorough understanding of the curriculum and instruction components across all grade-levels is essential when making decisions and supporting principals. Such understanding may require familiarity of instructional programming, knowledge of high-yield instructional strategies, and information on local and state assessment requirements across all grade-levels. However, according to the participants, the lack of this understanding becomes a challenge for those participants whose prior positions were solely in either elementary or secondary schools.

For instance, previous role experiences for two participants were either in elementary schools or were exclusively in secondary schools. Thus, as participants transitioned to the principal supervisor role, this lack of familiarity became an added challenge. Amanda stated, "I [didn't] know the elementary world [when I took the principal supervisor position]." This lack of knowledge and experience at the elementary level complicated her work when supporting principals because not only did she need to have a thorough understanding of curriculum, instruction, and testing across all grade-levels, but she also needed to be able to guide her principals to have the same capacity to help them connect upper levels of student learning. She explained:

> [T]he elementary principals need to see where the [students] are going and the quality of work that they're [going to] have to do in order to be successful on the TSI, or an AP exam, or what a college essay looks like, they need to know where that [student] is going.

For Emily a lack of familiarity of the curriculum and instructional intricacies of secondary schools was challenging when first transitioning to the principal supervisor position. She explained:

> So really understanding the nuances of high school, the complexities of it so that I could support the principal. I still know leadership and I know instruction, but I really wanted to know the specific aspects of high school. That was a learning curve.

Based on participants' responses in describing their experiences, principal supervisors encounter several challenges in developing the instructional leadership capacity of principals. These challenges include: central office politics and decision-making, multiple administrative role expectations, minimal instructional leader role support, and lack of familiarity of curriculum and instruction across grade-levels. While these challenges cannot be avoided, it appears that the participants have found several strategies to lessen the barriers and obstacles they face.

Strategies employed to address challenges. It is apparent from the data that while participants encounter contextual challenges in developing principals' instructional leadership capacity, they also employ specific strategies to address them. Strategy is defined as "a carefully developed plan or method for achieving a goal or the skill in developing and undertaking such a plan or method" (Merriam-Webster, 2019). The surfaced strategies include: employing previous role experiences, seeking colleague expertise and professional learning opportunities, setting a balanced schedule, working as a collaborative team, and establishing a vision and goals.

Employing previous experiences. A strategy which emerged from the data to address the challenge of minimal role support especially when transitioning to the principal supervisor position is tapping into the professional experiences of previously held positions. These positions appear to include: classroom teacher, assistant principal, athletic coach, campus principal, previous principal supervisor, and other leadership roles. According to the data, the most employed experience related to a campus principal as it was the most recent and relevant position individuals held prior to becoming principal supervisors. For example, Emily stated, "The only experience I would say honestly, was being an effective principal." That experience helped her transition to the principal supervisor position to coach and support her principals. She explained in further detail:

> I . . . was a mentor principal and a master principal . . . and so I had a lot of experience in helping support other principals in their development, but it wasn't supervisory. [It] was more coaching and peer support and leading professional learning communities with principals.

Emily also cited another previously held position in a non-profit educational organization working on a principal leadership program as additional experience she used to overcome the challenge. She explained:

> I believe my [time] working with the [educational organization] also helped because I was able to start looking at the basic knowledge that principals needed to have to be successful in a master's program. And I was able to use some of that information to help me understand principal leadership in a different way. So, I believe that also helped prepare me for the role.

Gina also credits "being an experienced principal at multiple levels, [both] middle and high school" as well as a similar principal supervisor position in a previous district as experiences which helped her transition to the position of principal supervisor.

Amanda also relied on previous experiences of teacher, assistant principal, athletic coach, and principal to support her transition period into the principal supervisor position. These experiences gave her the skills to enact the role of both an instructional leader and administrative manager:

> Being a teacher . . . helped me understand what it's like being in the classroom. When you're an [assistant principal], you're a jack of all trades. Then as a principal, you take all those experiences and you say, "Okay, now, what is my vision? You're building as you go and you're thinking . . . of the most important things. [Athletic] coaching is a wonderful way of preparing you for the managerial pieces of being a principal, being a supervisor. You've got to be organized . . . meet with people, . . . get along with people, [and] resolve conflict.

Seeking colleague expertise and professional learning opportunities. Data also revealed that participants sought out their colleagues for support and expert knowledge in areas where they lacked familiarity. This strategy often entails reaching out to fellow principal supervisors, district department experts, and campus principals. For instance, Emily relies on several colleagues to gain clarity on instructional matters. She stated, "[I] regularly attended PLCs [and] visited classrooms with district content experts to ensure an appropriate instructional lens. [And] leaned into the expertise of the principals and colleagues on matters that were unclear."

Similarly, Amanda seeks out support from both her colleagues and campus principals when she needs more expertise. She explained:

> I have some really good experts around here. I haven't had to go out very far. [I] have [colleagues] here to [ask questions]. Then [I] also . . . have a good bunch of principals that have years of experience. Learning from them has helped me grow as a professional. I think it's a combination of [both].

It also appears from the data that participants seek out professional learning opportunities that maybe either self-selected or prescribed by the district to enhance their own leadership capacity in identified areas. This strategy may entail attending leadership conferences, exploring and reading educational-related websites and books, and visiting other school districts. For instance, to learn more about secondary schools, Emily explored websites and attended conferences. She explained, "[I] pored over [the] TEA [Texas Education Agency] website to understand the accountability system and graduation requirements" and "[I] attended TASSP (Texas Association of Secondary School Administrators) conference." Specifically, to increase her technical and leadership skills as a principal supervisor, Emily attends professional learning sessions in another state. She stated, "The last few years [I] have attended the National Summit for Principal Supervisors in Florida." She finds this conference a great opportunity "to connect with other [principal] supervisors [and to] see . . . best practices [that] are out there." In addition, she has visited another school district to learn "how principal supervisors use [a] teaching framework to support principals." She added, "That was really powerful."

Gina attends leadership conferences and participates in the Systems of Great Schools Network sponsored by the TEA. The main goal is to learn approaches on how to improve" school systems to yield higher student academic achievement. Reading educational books is another strategy Gina employs. She stated, "I do read [about work-related issues], of course." An example she shared was books on topics of teams, data analysis, and leadership.

On the other hand, Amanda recently became involved in professional learning within her district to develop her technical and leadership skills as a principal supervisor to better support principals. She explained: "The [professional learning] . . . [is] targeted toward leadership and building leadership capacity [for me]." Amanda also attends conferences including the College Board's Advance Placement (AP) conference, the International Baccalaureate Programme (IB) conference, and various curriculum and instruction conferences. Additionally, she also reads several educational books including topics such as leadership and culturally responsive teaching.

Setting a balanced schedule. According to the participants, the challenge of attending to multiple administrative role responsibilities leaves the principal supervisors with little time to develop principals' instructional leadership capacity. To address this challenge, the participants rely on creating a schedule as a strategy to ensure dedicated time is secured for principals and that they can attend to other duties, too. This approach may entail purposefully devoting large blocks of time during the day, week, or month to conduct campus walk-throughs, observe principals, and facilitate monthly principal meetings and professional learning sessions. Allocating sufficient time may also involve connecting with principals via technology such as phone and video conferencing. Gina explained her approach to scheduling time by stating, "On Mondays, my [principal supervisors] and I meet at a campus. Then on Wednesdays, I will visit schools myself." During these times, she reviews data, walks the campus, and provides feedback for the principal.

At times, weekly work schedules are consumed by district-level meetings and attending to administrative managerial responsibilities thus reducing time to work with the principals. However, participants rank order obligations and activities to better support principals. For instance, Amanda strives to prioritize her time by communicating to district personnel that "If you want me, I'm available [only] at this time." Amanda explained her strategy on how she creates her schedule:

> [Weekly] I look at the 50% to 55% of the time centered around . . . looking at data [and] looking at instruction through walk-throughs. I try [to] visit at least four campuses a week. They're on a rotation. If there's a campus that maybe I am a little worried about or maybe I want to put a little bit of an extra eye [on] because we're working on something, that campus may come around that schedule a little bit more.

Emily, too, dedicates time on her schedule for monthly principal meetings, professional learning, and campus walk-throughs. Additionally, she finds opportunities to connect with principals when she physically cannot be with them by communicating via phone calls, video conferencing, texts, or emails. She explained:

> [S]ometimes it's a phone call [where] I'm coaching over the phone or we'll do a Skype or . . . text communication or email. But some way to be able to keep connected to them because it's not always face-to-face that we can have that kind of learning.

Working as a collaborative team. Another strategy used by participants to address challenges such as central office politics and decision-making, emerged: working together in a collaborative team. Engaging in a collaborative group ensures that the right stakeholders are present to make joint decisions. It may also involve mutually defining the issues to be addressed, functioning in unison to problem-solve and find solutions, and

understanding how decisions impact those being affected. Though participants appear to work as a collaborative team with their central office colleagues, how they solve problems or make decisions varies.

Recognizing how critical it is to function as a team at the central office level, participants make efforts to invite stakeholders to meet, gather information, establish protocols, and make joint decisions. For instance, Amanda stated, "I know that when it becomes a district thing, you have to involve more people. You have to have your ducks in a row a little bit more. You need to know the why, the research, [and] the data." To accomplish the goal of collaborating with many individuals with competing viewpoints, she first seeks clarifying information by asking, "What is each side [department] working on? How do we work together? Are there decisions that need to be made?" To answer these questions, she and the other department members come together to meet and discuss solutions. She explained, "We get everybody in the room to sit there and go, 'Okay, what is our processes [going to] be? What are those procedures?'"

Clearly understanding what others are seeking and their reasons for a decision is another critical component when working as a team for Amanda. She explained, "[I try to understand] what is important to [them] and also what [are their] non-negotiables?" At the same time, she is also cognizant of the fact that the impact of decisions made at the central office level ultimately affects the campuses and that collaboration is key to their success. She stated, "It's really important that we work as a team [at central office] because it's [going to] eventually go to the campus."

Gina also stressed the importance of working together as a team in central office. She explained: “I think it's a collaborative effort. It is not any one person that makes the greatest impact, but us collaboratively as a team. That means everyone has to understand what's at stake [and] everyone's department has to run efficiently.” To do so, she meets regularly with the heads of the other departments. As a team, she stated:

> We [meet] twice a week . . . with everyone around the table so that we collectively understand that all of our work impacts the schools. Together, [we] make the decisions as far as the everyday instructional delivery, operational [situations] and so forth.

Gina also sees defining the issues and problem-solving jointly as important work of a collaborative team. She strives to take a more proactive role in moving the work of teams from a place of stagnation to one of action. She explained: “[I have been] more aggressive, and bold, and standing up, and saying, ‘Stop team. We need to make a decision . . . [and] we need to really look at this and not move until this is well-defined.’"

Establishing a vision and goals. According to the data, to address the challenge of minimal role support requires principal supervisors to frame a vision of the instructional leader role and create goals to guide the work. This strategy appears to consist of not only defining the role of the principals but also of the principal supervisors as instructional leaders. In addition, the principal supervisors also determine the success criteria both for themselves and the principals to assess progress and performance towards identified goals. For instance, Gina explained that she and her team of principal supervisors began envisioning the work by first defining the principal as an instructional leader and asking,

"What are the characteristics and the qualities that we want to see in a principal?" They envisioned the principal as "the instructional leader and learner . . . [and] someone that gets results." Gina also enlisted the support of outside consultants and those who had previously been principal supervisors to define the vision and set goals. Once the vision was established, she and the other principal supervisors shared it with the principals to begin defining their own work and generating effective goals. To support the principals, Gina works closely with the principal supervisors she leads to establish an effective process for goal setting. She stated, "[I will be] calibrating [with the principal supervisors] and reviewing [with] them what a good goal is and what are the components of the goal." Specifically, she will ask the following questions:

> How do you ensure that there is evidence that shows the principals have accomplished that goal? How do you question? What are the levers and questioning strategies that you would use to help them get there instead of telling them so that they are able to visualize and materialize the plan in process?

Similarly, Emily and her team of principal supervisors needed to establish a vision and set clear goals for their work as instructional leaders. They began envisioning their work by first asking these questions: "As [principal supervisors], what are our goals? What are the expectations? What [is] our focus for our [principal] leaders? At the end of the year, how can we measure our success as [principal supervisors]?"

Emily also recognized that additional guidance was needed to answer these questions and accomplish their goals. To do so, she researched information on principal supervisors and located the *2015 Model Principal Supervisor Professional Standards* (MPSPS) developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) in

collaboration and counsel with The Wallace Foundation. These standards provide suggestions for principal supervisors on how to maximize their role as instructional leaders to effectively develop principals' instructional leadership capacity. Some propositions include: coaching, prioritizing time with principals, employing high-yield instructional strategies, evaluating principals' effectiveness, and supporting principals in promoting a positive school culture (CCSSO, 2015).

Emily further elaborated on how the standards could guide and anchor her work and that of the other principal supervisors. She stated:

> When I saw [the standards], I thought . . . this is what we need, it grounds our work. It's about our learning. We've not used [these] before, and so this is [going to] be a trial run for us. But I'm really excited [and] . . . the [principal] supervisors were very excited about having something. It's about us, right? Not disconnected from the work that we're doing.

This year, Emily and the principal supervisors will choose two of the MPSPS standards and will develop goals accordingly "so [they are] more aligned to our work [and] the evaluation instrument." She added: "We have some more work to do on that, but at least we're going to have goals that are aligned to standards because, they are about our work."

According to the data, participants employ specific strategies to minimize the difficulties they encounter. These strategies include: employing previous role experiences, seeking colleague expertise and professional learning, setting a balanced schedule, working as a collaborative team, and establishing a vision and goals. They not only used these strategies to ease their transition to the principal supervisor position but continue to rely on them on an ongoing basis. As a result, it appears that participants are more successful in

making decisions and overcoming political barriers and can focus and prioritize the instructional leadership work with principals.

SUMMARY

In summary, this chapter presented findings related to the study's three research questions exploring the principal supervisors' role, the practices they employ, and the challenges they encounter in developing principals' instructional leadership capacity. Additionally, findings were also presented on how the principal supervisors addressed the emergent challenges. The next chapter will reflect on the study's findings as they relate to previous research, share implications for educational practice, and offer recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5: Summary of Findings, Recommendations, and Conclusion

As state accountability measures continue to add pressure on school districts to increase student performance and close the academic achievement gap, the responsibility ultimately lands on the school principals. The instructional leadership of principals not only affects student outcomes, but it also impacts the teaching and learning that occurs in classrooms. Consequently, it is imperative that effective principalship exists at every school. To ensure principals have the support and guidance to lead instructionally, many school districts are turning to the principals' direct supervisor also referred to as the principal supervisor. The leadership of the principal supervisor is emerging as one that is critical to the effectiveness of a school principal, and thus further exploration is essential. Therefore, this study aimed to better understand the role principal supervisors play and the practices they employ in developing principals' instructional leadership capacity. It also explored the challenges they encounter and how they address them.

This chapter provides a summary of the study. It includes the purpose and research questions, summary of methods, discussion of major findings, limitations, recommendations for practice, recommendations for future research, and conclusion.

PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

A recent review of the literature has focused on how the principal supervisor role has evolved over the years from an individual who merely supervises to one who leads the instructional development of principals (Grissom & Loeb, 2011; NPBEA, 2015; NASSP,

2017a; Rousmaniere, 2007; Young & Fuller, 2009). Extant literature also reveals that principals require ongoing support, mentoring, and professional development from those who directly supervise them (CCSSO, 2015; Mendels, 2016; Saphier & Durkin, 2011). Although the principal supervisor role has progressed to one focused on developing principals' instructional leadership, it remains mostly undefined, over-looked, and under-utilized (Ikemoto et al., 2014; Saphier & Durkin, 2011). Currently, the roles and responsibilities of the principal supervisor are defined by the school district in which they work. As a result, the role of the principal supervisor may differ from one school district to another (CCSSO, 2015; Corcoran et al., 2013; Honig, 2012).

To date, only a handful of studies have been specifically conducted on the role of the principal supervisor and the practices they utilize to enhance principals' instructional leadership capacity; therefore, further exploration in this area of educational leadership is imperative (Casserly et al., 2013; Corcoran et al., 2013; Goldring et al., 2018; Honig et al., 2010; Honig, 2012; Honig & Rainey, 2014; Ovando & Huckestein, 2003). In fact, most studies were conducted in school districts that participated in an external program aimed at redefining leadership roles within central office and supporting development of the principal supervisor role with specific training or frameworks of practice (Casserly et al., 2013; Corcoran et al., 2013; Goldring et al., 2018; Honig et al., 2010; Honig, 2012).

Due to the limited scope of research, a thorough understanding of the role of the principal supervisors and the contributions they make towards the development of principals' instructional leadership capacity is further warranted (Honig et al., 2010; Honig,

2012). In addition, deeper exploration of the challenges they encounter and how do they address them is also needed in order to advance the knowledge related to the principal supervisor role (Honig, 2012).

The purpose of this study was to explore the principal supervisors' role, the practices they employ to develop principals' instructional leadership capacity and the challenges they encounter and how they address them. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What role do principal supervisors play in developing principals' instructional leadership capacity?
2. What practices do principal supervisors employ to develop principals' instructional leadership capacity?
3. What challenges do principal supervisors encounter in developing principals' instructional leadership capacity and how do they address them?

The findings of this study have the potential to add to the extant research and provide greater insight into the position of the principal supervisor for those currently in the job and those aspiring to become principal supervisors. Additionally, the results of this exploratory study may promote a better understanding of the principal supervisor role for school district administrators who determine, communicate, and direct the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of the position. Finally, the findings may advance interest in future studies and offer potential themes to explore.

The use of qualitative research allowed the researcher to directly interact with the participants and observe them in their natural setting and gain a deeper insight into the meanings participants hold about the phenomenon of study (Creswell, 2007). Grounded theory was employed given the absence of a pre-existing theoretical framework. This approach allowed the researcher to develop a theory based on the emerging themes discovered during the data collection process (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Due to the limited yet emerging research on the role of the principal supervisor, this exploratory study may provide additional foundational and empirical information for future research and theory development.

For the purposes of this study, three participants were purposively selected. They were currently employed in three different Texas school districts for the last three or more consecutive years as principal supervisors. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, pertinent document reviews, and observations of principal supervisors interacting with principals to gain further insight on the role, practices, and challenges of principal supervisors in developing principals' instructional leadership capacity. Document reviews included district organizational charts, principal supervisor's job descriptions and evaluation tools, meeting agendas, and any other relevant guiding documents or frameworks which may highlight the district's expectation on instructional leadership. The document review provided greater insight into the principal supervisor role and assisted the researcher in validating the data or highlighting discrepancies between

the participants' responses and the written expectations to develop principals' instructional leadership capacity.

MAJOR FINDINGS

In this study, it was important to first determine the role or roles principal supervisors play to better understand the practices they employ and the challenges they face when developing principals' instructional leadership capacity. In addition, how principal supervisors overcome some challenges they encountered was also addressed. The following is a summarized account of the major findings including The Roles Principal Supervisors Play, The Practices Principal Supervisors Employ, The Challenges Principal Supervisors Encounter and How Do They Address Them in an effort to develop principals' instructional leadership capacity. Additionally, limitations of the study and the recommendations for practice and further inquiry are provided.

The Role Principal Supervisors Play in Developing Principals' Instructional Leadership Capacity

As stated previously, the description of the roles of the principal supervisor include the responsibilities that make up the functions they perform in an attempt to develop principals' instructional leadership. Therefore, each of the surfaced roles are presented along with the main responsibilities. The findings of the study suggest that the principal supervisors play two major roles in the position as supported by previous research. These roles include: instructional leader and administrative manager.

Instructional leader. The findings revealed that one major role principal supervisors play is to attend to instructional matters that are focused on improving student achievement and enhancing principals' instructional leadership capacity. This finding supports conclusions of previous studies that as instructional leaders principal supervisors broker services and distribute resources to support curriculum, instruction, and personnel needs at schools in addition to communicating and clarifying district goals and expectations (Casserly et al., 2013; Corcoran et al., 2013; Goldring et al., 2018; Honig, 2012). The study also supports some research-based theoretical models and frameworks of what the instructional leader role responsibilities of principal supervisor should be in school districts (CCSSO, 2015; Goldring et al., 2018; Honig, 2012; Ikemoto et al., 2014).

To enact their role as instructional leaders, principal supervisors carry out specific responsibilities. The responsibilities include: alignment of district and school goals, implementation and support of instructional programs, analysis of data, and allocation of resources.

Alignment of district and school goals. The findings revealed that one major responsibility of principal supervisors is to provide clarity, guidance, and unity of purpose so that the principals may meet district expectations and set school goals. By facilitating alignment, principal supervisors attempt to ensure that both the district and campuses are working towards common goals and initiatives to support instructional improvement. This finding supports the recommendations made by the CCSSO (2015) as referenced in the *2015 Model Principal Supervisor Professional Standards* and supports findings of studies

that principal supervisors must clarify and translate the goals of the district to support principals in aligning their school goals (Burch & Danley, 1980; Honig, 2012).

Implementation and support of instructional programs. According to the findings, ensuring effective instructional programs are in place to improve student learning in schools is a critical responsibility. Both implementation and support can vary in scope and actions depending on the types of supervised schools and the programs in place. For instance, to ensure high-levels of teaching and learning in all schools, principal supervisors may use an explicit learning framework while others may offer support through funding or by working side-by-side with the principals through the implementation process. Although not explicitly addressed by previous research, the implementation and support of instructional programs was found to be a major responsibility of the instructional leader role. Thus, this study adds to the body of literature the importance of principal supervisor's efforts to assist principals in implementing instructional programs.

Analysis of data. According to the findings, analysis of student data appears to be another critical responsibility of principal supervisors as instructional leaders. Data analysis involves the interpretation of student academic data as well as identification of achievement trends and gaps in learning. Findings also suggest that principal supervisors engage in a collaborative process with the principals and in some instances with teachers to analyze the campus academic data in detail and provide feedback to develop action-oriented response plans. This finding is congruent with Casserly et al.'s (2013) conclusion that principal supervisors dialogue with principals about their school data.

Allocation of resources. The findings indicate that as instructional leaders, principal supervisors attempt to ensure principals have access to the necessary resources to support teaching and learning in schools. These resources may include instructional materials, external consultants, trainings, professional learning opportunities, technology, and access to certain departments at the central office level including curriculum and instruction, human resources, special programs, or finance. This finding echoes previous studies in that a major instructional leader role responsibility is to provide access to resources for principals (Burch & Danley, 1980; Corcoran et al., 2013; Honig et al., 2010; Honig, 2012; Ovando & Huckestein, 2003). It is apparent that allocation of resources comes as a major role responsibility given that principal supervisors work directly with principals to identify their needs and that they are the linking source to the internal central office level resources and at times to external resources.

Administrative manager. The findings also revealed principal supervisors perform the role of administrative manager. As such, they appear to address responsibilities related to the operational aspects of the position. This finding aligns to previous research suggesting that principal supervisors carry out the day-to-day administrative responsibilities (Burch & Danley, 1980; Casserly et al., 2013; Corcoran et al., 2013; Goldring et al., 2018; Honig, 2012; Ikemoto et al., 2014). The responsibilities of the administrative manager role include: managing daily operations, addressing student and personnel matters, and hiring staff.

Managing daily operations. According to the findings, tending to the day-to-day operational aspects of the schools emerged as a major responsibility for principal supervisors as administrative managers. Duties related to operations appear to consist of responding to non-instructional matters such as a campus crisis, building maintenance, and managing budgets. This finding echoes previous studies that a major administrative role responsibility is to support principals with the operational duties of school management (Burch & Danley, 1980; Goldring et al., 2018).

Addressing student and personnel matters. The findings suggest that as administrative managers, principal supervisors address student and personnel matters when a problem solution has not been reached by the campus principal and has escalated to the district level. This responsibility often entails principal supervisors overseeing matters relating to student discipline and parent and employee concerns. This finding supports conclusions by researchers, Burch and Danley (1980), Casserly et al. (2013), and Goldring et al. (2018) that assert principal supervisors are accountable and responsible for supporting principals in addressing student and personnel matters.

Hiring staff. According to the findings, the principal supervisors are also responsible for hiring staff, including the selection of a campus principal. Hiring of staff primarily focuses on ensuring the most qualified personnel are hired for vacant positions. While not explicitly addressed by previous research, the hiring of the school principal was found to be a major responsibility of the administrative manager role. Thus, this study

adds to the body of literature by acknowledging that as the administrative manager, the principal supervisor provides input and contributes to the selection of the best candidate.

The Practices Principal Supervisors Employ to Develop Principals' Instructional Leadership Capacity

It appears from the findings that principal supervisors intentionally employ specific practices to develop the instructional leadership capacity of principals. According to this study, the most relevant practices are as follows: building relationships, providing and facilitating professional learning, and coaching for instructional leadership.

Building relationships. The findings revealed that creating relationships with principals is a critical practice the principal supervisors employ. This practice refers to structures that aim to connect principal supervisors and principals as well as to promote the development of professional relationships amongst principals and teachers. This finding is congruent with studies conducted by Honig et al. (2010) and Honig (2012), which concluded that the value of building relationships between principal supervisors and principals is critical to supporting and enhancing principals' instructional leadership capacity. However, this study expands the notion that building relationships requires certain intentional actions by principal supervisors. These may include developing trust, listening with empathy to understand principal viewpoints, promoting celebrations, and clearly communicating with principals. As a result, principal supervisors seem to be able to clearly establish the vision and expectations of the work for principals. This finding supports the recommendations made by the CCSSO (2015) as referenced in the *2015 Model*

Principal Supervisor Professional Standards and supports findings of studies that through motivation, support, and encouragement, principal supervisors can develop trust and build relationships (Burch & Danley, 1980; Ovando & Huckestein, 2003).

Providing and facilitating professional learning. Findings also suggest that another practice employed by principal supervisors is making professional learning opportunities accessible to principals. Professional learning may be defined as gaining or enhancing technical understanding, knowledge, and skills associated with principals' instructional capacity. This finding confirms previous assertions that the principal supervisor should engage with principals on an ongoing basis to develop their instructional leadership capacity (Burch & Danley, 1980; Casserly et al., 2012; Goldring et al., 2018; Honig, 2008; Honig et al., 2010; Honig, 2012; Ovando & Huckestein, 2003). Further, this finding supports the recommendations from the *2015 Model Principal Supervisor Professional Standards* (CCSSO, 2015) that the principal supervisors strategically plan and provide professional learning opportunities for principals. In addition, this study expands previous studies by highlighting specific actions taken by principal supervisors to enhance principals' instructional leadership capacity. It appears from the findings that the delivery of professional learning may be facilitated through various structures and formats including monthly meetings, book studies, article readings, campus learning walks, sessions with external consultants, and other resources. These can be learning opportunities scheduled throughout the school year either individually with principals or collectively with teams.

Additionally, findings indicate that professional learning opportunities follow explicit agendas to address specific campus-related topics and needs.

Coaching for instructional leadership. The findings revealed that another major practice employed by principal supervisors is coaching principals on instructional leadership. Coaching relates to specific training (direct instructions, follow-ups, and support of instructional leadership) based on factual, individual evidence and tailored to principals' needs. However, it appears that coaching may require purposefully observing principals and providing constructive feedback inclusive of strategies to enhance their practice as instructional leaders. The findings are congruent with previous literature which suggests that coaching is a critical practice employed by principal supervisors to deepen the instructional leadership skills and knowledge of principals (Casserly et al., 2013; Goldring et al., 2018; Honig, 2012; Mendels, 2016; Ovando & Huckestein, 2003; Saphier & Durkin, 2011; Thessin et al., 2018).

It also appears that principal supervisors differentiate coaching support to address individual principal's needs. This finding supports a study conducted by Honig (2012) which concluded that principal supervisors strive to differentiate coaching support based on the needs of the principal and their level of knowledge and skills around instructional leadership. Further, the findings of this study also support the recommendations from the *2015 Model Principal Supervisor Professional Standards* (CCSSO, 2015) that principal supervisors provide and differentiate coaching support.

Although previous studies found that conducting observations or learning walks (Honig, 2012; Ovando & Huckestein, 2003) are actions carried out by principal supervisors, this study adds that principal supervisors also employ questioning strategies, shadow coaching, discussions based on article readings, case studies, and scenarios to develop the instructional leadership capacity of principals. By using these various strategies participants are better equipped to differentiate support for principals.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that depending on school district structures there is a need to assign a lead principal supervisor to oversee a team of principal supervisors who directly support individual principals. In this model, the lead principal supervisor not only evaluates the team of principal supervisors but also coaches them on how to develop principals' instructional leadership capacity. Coaching tends to specifically focus on observing and providing feedback to the team of principal supervisors as they work with principals. This finding advances the notion that given a school district structure, lead principal supervisors are appointed to guide and support the work of principal supervisors through the practice of coaching.

The Challenges Principal Supervisors Encounter in Developing Principals' Instructional Leadership Capacity and How Do They Address Them.

According to the study's findings, it appears that the principal supervisors do encounter certain problems and obstacles in developing principals' instructional leadership

capacity. However, the findings also reveal some strategies principal supervisors employ to address surfaced challenges.

Challenges encountered. Findings suggest that the principal supervisors encounter several obstacles that prevent them from fully focusing and addressing the needs of principals. These challenges may surface during the principal supervisors' initial transition to the position or emerge on an ongoing basis. The surfaced challenges appear to include: central office politics and decision-making, multiple administrative role expectations, minimal instructional leader role support, and lack of familiarity of curriculum and instruction across grade-levels.

Central office politics and decision-making. Political and micro-political behaviors of stakeholders at the central office level appear to pose as a major challenge for principal supervisors both during the transition to the position and on a frequent basis. Some examples include bureaucratic policies of decision-making and the self-interest of those involved in the decision-making process which tend to delay allocation and accessibility to resources for principals and to foster the perception of a non-collaborative culture, dysfunction, and mistrust. This finding supports the notion that principal supervisors' work is hindered by the political power tensions among central office staff (Goldring et al., 2018). As experienced by the principal supervisors in this study, bureaucratic decision-making often appears to be outside of their locus of control and dependent on those with the decision-making power thus impacting their role as instructional leaders.

Multiple administrative role expectations. Attending to numerous administrative obligations appears to consume much of the principal supervisors' time and limit opportunities to provide principals with the needed instructional leadership coaching and support. These multiple administrative expectations may include participating in district-level meetings, working with the school board and the superintendent, supporting district initiatives, addressing student and parent concerns, or responding to crises on campuses. This finding is in line with previous conclusions that as administrative managers, principal supervisors have less time to focus on developing principals' instructional leadership capacity (Burch & Danley, 1980; Corcoran et al., 2013; Goldring et al., 2018; Honig, 2012; Ikemoto et al., 2014). According to Burch and Danley (1980) and Honig (2012), addressing multiple expectations is exacerbated by the poor use of time by principal supervisors and unforeseen external demands imposed upon by others within the organization.

Minimal instructional leader role support. Another challenge principal supervisors appear to encounter is the lack of guidance on how to fulfill the responsibilities and meet the expectations specifically associated with the role of instructional leader. The limited support principal supervisors receive may refer to unclear direction and communication related to the instructional leader role in addition to lack of clearly defined goals, priorities, and success criteria. This finding supports previous research that suggests principal supervisors are provided little orientation on how to enact their roles as instructional leaders (Burch & Danley, 1980; Honig, 2012; Saltzman, 2016; Saphier &

Durkin, 2011). According to others, most districts fail to communicate explicit role expectations to principal supervisors (Honig, 2012; Ikemoto et al., 2014).

Lack of familiarity of curriculum and instruction across grade-levels. Principal supervisors also appear to have a limited understanding of the curriculum and instruction components across all grade-levels. Similarly, a lack of information about instructional programming, knowledge of high-yield instructional strategies, and information on local and state assessment requirements across all grade-levels can become a serious challenge. This finding supports conclusions by Corcoran et al. (2013) that principal supervisors who lack the depth and knowledge of curriculum and instruction at all levels find supporting (school) principals a serious challenge. This problem is especially challenging when previous positions held by the principal supervisor were solely at either the elementary or secondary school level.

Strategies employed to address challenges. Findings suggest that the principal supervisors methodically employ specific strategies to address the challenges they encounter. These strategies include: employing previous role experiences, seeking colleague expertise and professional learning opportunities, setting a balanced schedule, working as a collaborative team, and establishing a vision and goals.

Employing previous role experiences. It appears from the findings that a common strategy used by principals to address the challenge of minimal role support is tapping into the professional experiences of previously held positions. This strategy is apparently particularly helpful during the initial transition to the principal supervisor position. Such

previous positions seem to include: classroom teacher, assistant principal, athletic coach, campus principal, previous principal supervisor, and other leadership roles. This finding is consistent to Honig's (2012) conclusion that in the absence of clear role support, principal supervisors rely on previous roles and professional experiences.

Seeking colleague expertise and professional learning opportunities. Reaching out to their colleagues and attending professional development sessions appear to be additional strategies used by principal supervisors to address areas where they lack familiarity and experience. This finding partially supports Honig's (2012) conclusion that principal supervisors' work was influenced by the peers they interacted with most. However, this study adds to the current literature that principal supervisors seek out and engage in targeted professional learning opportunities that may be self-selected and/or prescribed by the district to address or expand their knowledge and skills.

Setting a balanced schedule. Establishing a schedule which prioritizes time with principals appears to be another strategy employed by principal supervisors to address the challenge of multiple administrative role responsibilities consuming their time. This strategy often entails purposefully blocking large periods of time during the day, week, or the month to conduct campus walk-throughs, observe principals, and facilitate monthly principal meetings and professional learning sessions. Balancing their time may also involve connecting with principals via technology such as phone and video conferencing. This finding supports previous research assertions that by either developing a weekly schedule or by finding alternative ways to connect and communicate with the principals is

an ideal strategy to address the challenge of the principal supervisors' time taken by administrative responsibilities (Goldring et al., 2018; Honig, 2012; Thessin et al., 2018).

Working as a collaborative team. Working collectively as a team at the central office level appears to yield a more timely and efficient decision-making process while also minimizing the political and micro-political behaviors of stakeholders. This strategy seems to create an opportunity for both the principal supervisors and other central office teams to come together to seek clarity, align on the goals, resolve issues, and streamline the decision-making process. This finding adds to the current literature that principal supervisors are better able to address some challenges they encounter by strategizing and encouraging collaborative teaming.

Establishing a vision and goals. To address the challenge of minimal role support and lack of role clarity, the principal supervisors intentionally develop a vision of their role as instructional leaders and then establish goals to meet the expectations of their work. Though several studies have suggested that the district should clearly establish a vision and goals (Burch & Danley, 1980; Corcoran et al., 2013; Goldring et al., 2018; Ikemoto et al., 2014), this study expands the understanding that principal supervisors take the lead to establish a vision, set goals, and determine the success criteria of their instructional leader role expectations and support of principals.

LIMITATIONS

This study only focused on the role, practices, and challenges of principal supervisors in developing principals' instructional leadership capacity in large school districts. In addition, this study included a small sample of participants employed in three Texas school districts and no central office personnel, principals, or teachers were included; therefore, findings might not be generalizable to other school districts within Texas or to other states. However, based on the scope and findings of this study, certain recommendations for practice and future research are offered.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Given the importance of the dual roles that principal supervisors perform, the illuminated practices, and the strategies used to address the surfaced contextual challenges they face in attempting to enhance principals' leadership capacity, district administrators, principal supervisor managers, and both aspiring and current principal supervisors may consider the following recommendations:

District administrators. In an effort to provide ongoing support for principal supervisors, district administrators may consider the following recommendations:

First, clearly articulate the vision, goals, and success criteria for the principal supervisor as an instructional leader. Doing so might elevate the value of the role of the principal supervisor in developing principals' instructional leadership capacity. More importantly, by clarifying the contextual expectations for the role of the principal

supervisor will communicate the importance of the role of the principal supervisors to all district personnel. Second, by intentionally reducing the number of administrative responsibilities of the principal supervisors, district administrators will allow them to focus more on instructional matters. This action will also inform others in the district the priorities of a principal supervisor and the need to protect their time to work side-by-side with the principals to enhance their instructional leadership capacity. Third, adopt a framework or provide guidelines to better equip principal supervisors. For instance, the *2015 Model Principal Supervisor Professional Standards (MPSPS)* may be used as a tool to define expectations and establish context-specific goals for principal supervisors so that they may be in a better position to guide and support principals.

Principal supervisor managers. Individuals who directly supervise, evaluate, and direct the work of principal supervisors may consider the following suggestions:

First, in the interest of truly supporting the work of new principal supervisors and guaranteeing their success, the managers should develop an on-boarding or an orientation process. Such a process may include a description of the roles and responsibilities as well as clear success criteria. Such information may be contained in a handbook or manual which may also include the position's description, the district's vision and goals, an instructional leadership role definition, specific district outcomes, and contact information about the different central office level departments. Second, principal supervisor managers should strive to provide tailored professional development to enhance principal supervisors' instructional leadership capacity. Depending on their previous school level

experiences, principal supervisors may benefit from learning opportunities associated with the additional school level curriculum or other context specific information. Principal supervisor managers may also develop a pre-service training program for aspiring principal supervisors to clearly articulate the position's role, responsibilities, and success criteria. Capacity-building programs should specifically focus on coaching for instructional leadership and managing the instructional leader and administrative manager role responsibilities. Third, principal supervisor managers should intentionally buffer principal supervisors from bureaucratic policies and non-principal supervisor duties. The process of buffering can support principal supervisors in making critical decisions without having to navigate a complex decision-making process. Additionally, freeing principal supervisors from extra duties, may allow them to provide support and services in a timely manner to principals.

Principal supervisors. Those currently performing principal supervision roles as well as aspiring to such a position in the future may consider the following recommendations:

First, they should clarify expectations of the role responsibilities and performance success criteria of the position. By doing so, principal supervisors may enhance their knowledge of the depth and complexity of the position's expectations. Further, they might be able to prioritize the work and establish goals to meet the expectations. Second, principal supervisors should engage in professional learning opportunities to enhance their principal supervisor capacity. Specifically, they should focus on strengthening their

coaching and feedback skills. By doing so, principal supervisors will be able to provide principals personalized support as they enhance their instructional leadership capacity. Third, principal supervisors should expand their knowledge of instructional, curriculum, and accountability expectations of the grade-levels they oversee. Such knowledge will not only increase their instructional understanding but will also build credibility as they guide principals to make instructional programming decisions in relation to curriculum expectations.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Due to the limited scope and the number of participants and districts in this study, further research is recommended in several areas.

First-year principal supervisors' perceptions. Future studies could explore the perceptions of first-year principal supervisors. Specifically, studies could focus on how they perceive their role, manage their work, and overcome challenges they encounter. Researchers could also investigate the types of job-embedded training or professional learning that is offered to first-year principal supervisors to develop their capacity as instructional leaders.

Role of the principal supervisor manager. Researchers could explore the principal supervisor manager's perception of the roles and responsibilities of the principal supervisors. Studies could also explore how the principal supervisor manager establishes a success criterion to evaluate the principal supervisors' performance. Additionally,

researchers could study the working relationship between the manager and principal supervisors.

Superintendents' and principals' perceptions on the role of the principal supervisor. Future studies could explore the perceptions of the superintendent of the role of the principal supervisor and how the school district's instructional vision translates to their role as instructional leaders. Researchers could also explore the vision of the superintendent on how principal supervisors should develop the instructional leadership capacity of principals. Additionally, further inquiry on principals' perceptions of the role of the principal supervisors in developing their instructional leadership capacity is recommended.

Impact of school district size and organizational structure on the role and responsibilities of the principal supervisor. Future studies could focus on the impact of school district size and organizational structure on the roles and responsibilities of the principal supervisor. This focus may include the scope and span of responsibilities, caseload of assigned principals, and additional roles as an instructional leader and administrative manager.

Effect of organizational politics and dynamics on the role of the principal supervisor. In the future, researchers could study the political and micro-political behaviors of stakeholders at the central office level and how they impact the role of the principal supervisor. Studies could specifically explore the political challenges principal supervisors encounter and how do they address them to successfully support principals.

CONCLUSION

The focus of this study was on principal supervisors and how they collaboratively work with principals to improve student outcomes. Principals must be well-versed in all the intricate facets of instructional leadership and require ongoing development and support by those who directly supervise them, namely principal supervisors. As this study suggests, the contributions of the principal supervisor have evolved, and the roles and responsibilities have become more complex. Therefore, based on the collective review of this study's results, the following propositions are derived:

Proposition #1. Establishing a vision, goals, and success criteria for principal supervisors are essential to successfully develop principals' instructional leadership capacity. These guidelines will not only support principal supervisors during their initial transition to the position but will also provide direction on how to prioritize the work and evaluate their own performance in developing principals' instructional leadership capacity. For school districts in need of resources, the *2015 Model Principal Supervisor Professional Standards* (MPSPS) may serve as a tool during the visioning process.

Proposition #2. Performance of principal supervisors entails dual roles, instructional leader and administrative manager. Therefore, reducing the non-instructional duties will allow a more direct attention to instructional matters and aspects related to the development of the principals' instructional leadership capacity.

Proposition #3. The use of intentional practices by principal supervisors enhances the leadership capacity of principals to effectively lead instruction. Practices such as

building relationships, providing and facilitating professional learning, and coaching for instructional leadership enable the principal supervisors to better connect with principals and individualize their professional development and instructional leadership coaching.

Proposition #4. By employing purposeful strategies such as reliance on previous role experiences, seeking professional peers' expertise, accessing focused professional learning opportunities, setting a balanced schedule, working as a collaborative team, and establishing vision and goals, principal supervisors may successfully fulfill their responsibilities as instructional leaders of principals.

Proposition # 5. Having a thorough and expanded knowledge of instructional programming, curriculum expectations, teaching strategies, and assessment requirements for all school levels is essential and enables principal supervisors to provide grade level-specific guidance to principals.

Finally, it is relevant to affirm that an enhanced understanding of the role, practices, and challenges of principal supervisors can lead to better defining not only their work but also the work that should and needs to be prioritized. As the state accountability demands continue to place the school principals under a microscope of scrutiny, it is imperative that they also receive the support needed to enhance their instructional leadership capacity. Who better to do that than their direct supervisors? By considering the challenges principal supervisors encounter, central office leaders can offer role and context specific assistance and buffer them from the bureaucratic processes and structures so that they are able to truly

dedicate their expertise, time, and energy to develop principals' instructional leadership capacity.

Appendix A

Interview Guide

Part 1: Introduction and Demographics

1. Tell me about your educational career?
2. What is your official title?
3. How long have you been a principal supervisor in this district?
4. How were you selected for this role?
5. What experiences did you have that prepared you for this role?
6. How many principals do you supervise?
7. Tell me about the organizational structure of your district in relation to principal supervisors?
    a. Who do you report to?
    b. Who evaluates your performance?

Part 2: Research Focus Questions

1. Tell me about your work with principals.
    a. What are your assigned responsibilities?
    b. How do you prioritize your responsibilities?
    c. What are some of the most important decisions you make?
2. Who or what guides you in your daily work as a principal supervisor?
    a. How are expectations about your work communicated to you?
    b. Who evaluates your performance?
    c. How is your performance evaluated?
3. What was your experience as a principal, and how does it inform the work you do now?
4. In your work with principals, what is your main emphasis?
5. What are the most difficult functions/tasks of your position?
6. When you are faced with a difficulty or a conflict, how do you address it?
7. What professional development have you attended to develop your own instructional leadership capacity as a principal supervisor?
    a. Who is the provider of this professional development?
8. By who are you supervised and how are you supervised?
    a. Is it more directive or instructive? Are they facilitators vs micro managers?
9. What kind of support do you receive to navigate your own role?
10. How do you go about developing principals' instructional leadership capacity?
    a. Provide examples.
    b. How does this occur?
11. How do you determine the effectiveness of what you do in developing principals' instructional leadership capacity?
    a. What indicators do you seek? Provide examples.

12. Describe specific interactions you have with principals regarding instructional leadership.
13. In fulfilling your responsibilities, who do you engage with to support the development of principals' instructional leadership capacity? Provide some examples.

Part 3: Additional Information/Insight

1. Is there anything else you would like to add?
2. Did I forget to ask you anything about what do you do in order to develop principals' instructional leadership capacity?

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